Young People Engaging with Risk through Everyday Practices on Facebook

by

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Declaration of Originality

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis, nor does the thesis contain any material that infringes copyright.

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Statement of Ethical Conduct

The research associated with this thesis abides by the international and Australian codes on human and animal experimentation, the guidelines by the Australian Government's Office of the Gene Technology Regulator and the rulings of the Safety, Ethics and Institutional Biosafety Committees of the University.

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Abstract

Young people's social media use has become a focus of concern, particularly for governments, social service providers and parents. However, the apprehension of these groups is presented from a predominantly adult-centric perspective that frames young people as being 'at risk' in online environments. This narrative has fuelled a social media panic about the vulnerability of young people who are considered to be 'at risk' of online bullying, exposure to self-harming, and the predatory behaviours of strangers. Young people's explanations of how they understand and engage with risks on social media are undervalued compared to accounts provided by adults.

This research aimed to explore the suppressed narrative of young people and online risks by privileging their voices through a youth-centred approach. I adopted this standpoint to explore and understand the everyday social media practices of young people using Facebook. Drawing on sociocultural theories of risk, I analysed how risk is created, understood and experienced through the online interactions of young people. The primary research question this study has answered was: How do young people engage with risk through their everyday practices on Facebook?

A qualitative netnography was conducted with young people aged 15 to 18 years living in Australia who use Facebook. Netnography is a specialised form of ethnography involving participant-observation based in online fieldwork. Stage One of the research design involved seven months of online participant-observation of 73 young people's Facebook profiles and their interactions with their Facebook friends. Stage Two involved semi-structured interviews using Facebook private messages. Sixteen young people, a subset of the initial participant group, formed the interview sample. The two datasets were thematically analysed.

The results of this study indicate that the participants engaged with risk on Facebook as an everyday experience of their online presence. However, analysis of the data clarified that young people actively engaged in their own risk practices by 'knowing and unknowing risks' and 'making and taking risks'. Young people demonstrated how they 'know' and 'unknow' risks through recognising risks, reframing risks and normalising risks. Young people showed how they 'made' and 'took' risks through connection, content and collective practices. Overall, these types of engagement reflect how ideas about risk on Facebook are co-

constructed, and how this process is intertwined with identity formation and the need for belonging. Importantly, the results of the study reveal that violence was an everyday experience for participants, and that their everyday online practices were gendered. While literature has shown that young people use social media to reflect identity and enhance their belonging through connections and relationships, this research highlights *how* this is done: through practices of risk. The implications of these findings for practice, education and policy are discussed in this thesis, along with ideas for future research.

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of how young people and risk on social media became the focus of my research. I believe that much conversation on this topic has been unnecessarily negatively framed and based on adult perspectives. Young people's voices are missing and are essential to exploring the complexities of young people's understandings and experiences of risk on social media.

I begin the chapter by discussing the motivation for this research. An overview of why this research is needed is provided, highlighting the dominant, overwhelmingly negative, narrative about young people and social media. Young people are considered to be 'at risk' (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998; Sharland 2006), 'at risk' online (Choo 2009; Dombrowski, LeMasney, Ahia & Dickson 2004; Fleming, Greentree, Cocotti-Muller, Elias & Morrison 2006; Flood 2007; Madigan, Villani, Azzopardi, Laut, Smith, Temple, Browne & Dimitropoulos 2018; McVeigh 2016; Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak 2007), and are viewed as innocent and vulnerable (Berson 2000; Jackson & Scott 1999; Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak 2001; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998). I challenge this dominant risk narrative by arguing for a more complex consideration of the topic, one based on young people's opinions and experiences. Additionally, there has been a lack of social work attention paid to young people and risk, which establishes the significance of the research.

Having provided a background to the study, literature and statistics on young people's online usage is presented. Social media is a popular, and now common, way that young people interact with each other (Belsey 2008; boyd 2007b; boyd 2014; Pieters & Krupin 2010; Price & Dalgleish 2010; Ralph, Berglas, Schwartz & Brindis 2011; Wigand, Wood & Mande 2010). Social media is indispensable to everyday life (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith & Zickuhr 2010; Walker & Bakopoulous 2004) and necessary for inclusion in social relations (Mahony 2013; Robards 2012). This is the context in which young people engage with risk online.

I provide my conceptual framework for this research, showing the bodies of scholarship that inform this research, namely a youth-centred view influenced by sociocultural theory of risk. The conceptual framework I have adopted for this research allows for a youth-centred exploration of young people based on their opinions and behaviours on social media. It also

allows investigation of how risk is understood and engaged with by young people through social interactions. This provides a context for my primary research question: How do young people engage with risk through their everyday practices on Facebook? A summary of the structure and content of the thesis concludes the chapter.

Motivation for the research

What led to my exploration of young people and risk on social media?

My first position as a qualified social worker was as ‘youth officer’ for a local council. I was based at the local youth centre which worked with young people aged 12 to 24. In this role, I connected with local young people, young offenders, and young leaders, but predominantly with young people deemed to be ‘at risk’. Young people ‘at risk’ was a term commonly used by workers in the facility, workers from other agencies, and in schools. Young people who were seen to be ‘at risk’ were provided opportunities to engage in group work facilitated by the youth centre.

Although knowing that these young people were referred to programs because of their characterisation as ‘at risk’, I never viewed them in this way. Instead, I saw them as young people, at a stage of life where they were discovering who they were, being influenced by people around them, and able to enact their agency. My perspective in working with these young people was that despite their social circumstance, family situation, friendship groups, and school experiences, these were people who had the ability to enact their agency. They showed their agency in how they chose to engage in the group work, how they connected and responded to other young people in the group and how they interacted with people in the community to whom they were introduced.

My more recent social work practice experiences as a school social worker have also influenced this research. Through this work, primarily with a younger age range of four-to 13-year-olds, I again worked closely with young people. These young people are not spoken of as being ‘at risk’, but instead as being ‘in need’. From my perspective, however, these young people also presented as asserting agency in various aspects of their lives.

These experiences of working with young people cemented their capabilities in my mind. It solidified my positioning, too: being with the young person as they were, regardless of any labels or narratives that may have been attached to them. Essentially, I challenged the idea of young people being simply ‘at risk’ and saw another perspective of young people as capable and able to enact agency. My work has also highlighted to me the huge importance of helping young people to have a voice, and of being an advocate for young people on the issues that were important to them.

Thus, these experiences have led me to question the deterministic narrative about young people and risk online. An overly deterministic narrative is problematic as it does not factor in how young people make choices about risk online. Consequently, I have developed this research as a way to investigate how young people engage with risk on social media. As a social worker, listening to the young people’s voices and advocating for the issues that are important to them is professionally paramount.

Why is this research needed?

There is need for a more complex consideration of young people and risk on social media, and for that consideration to be based on young people’s ideas and experiences rather than on the negative adult-driven perspectives that currently dominate discussion. Young people’s use of the Internet and social media have become a focus of concern for governments, social service providers and parents. The safety of young people, who predominate on web-sites such as Facebook, has emerged as a key contemporary social issue. The Internet is often referred to as a risky space, particularly for young people. Young people are seen to be ‘at risk’ of things such as predators, bullying and privacy issues in this space. Young people’s vulnerability on online sites has therefore been highlighted particularly in terms of young people being ‘at risk’ of bullying, or of being targeted and groomed by child sex offenders (Fleming, Greentree, Cocotti-Muller, Elias & Morrison 2006; Flood 2007; Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak 2007), particularly through social networking sites such as Facebook (Choo 2009; Dombrowski, LeMasney, Ahia & Dickson 2004). Concern has been expressed for how young people may use the Internet inappropriately, and in ways that damage their reputations (e.g., sharing inappropriate photographs of themselves using mobile phones or Internet sites) or compromise their safety (e.g., by providing personal details about

themselves to ‘strangers’ online). ‘Cyber-bullying’ has been recognised as a form of abuse that young people can be subjected to online (Campbell 2005; Dooley, Pyzalski & Cross 2009; Shariff 2005). Cyber-bullying involves using technology as a medium through which to harm others, and its effects can be devastating for young people. Cyber-bullying is different from traditional forms of bullying, as it can be instantaneous and visible to a wide audience. There are good reasons to worry about young people’s safety online. While there is legitimacy to these ideas, and it is important to acknowledge the risks online, this subject is complex.

Debates on young people and online risk are polarised between the perceived benefits and the possible threats (Cranmer 2013, p. 72). These polarising views create an extreme binary: that social media is good or bad (boyd 2014, p. 24). Adult perceptions of the Internet are often utopian, reflecting an optimistic view, or dystopian, reflecting a pessimistic view. The online space is far too broad and complex for this simplistic binary; it is both good and bad, utopian and dystopian. I argue that it is not a case of negatives versus positives, a utopic space or a dystopic space. It is not that simple or deterministic. I agree with the assertion made by boyd (2014, p. 15) that a utopian and dystopian rhetoric emerges from people’s confusion and misunderstanding of social media. boyd (2014, p. 15) states that ‘the dystopian notion that teens are addicted to social media or the utopian idea that technology will solve inequality’ fail to provide a full understanding of the context. Utopian and dystopian perspectives assume that technologies affect ‘*all* people in *all* situations the same way’ (boyd 2014, p. 15). The extreme rhetoric that these polarised perspectives create is unhelpful to understanding young people and their social media use (boyd 2014, p. 16). The utopian/dystopian dichotomy reinforces the conceptualisation of the Internet as separate from everyday life (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 139). Social media is so ingrained and entwined in young people’s lives that an easy distinction between online and offline cannot be made. The online and offline worlds are seamlessly blended together to form the social worlds we live in (Gyor 2017, p. 132). As boyd (2014, p. 24) states: ‘The internet mirrors, magnifies, and makes more visible the good, bad, and ugly of everyday life’. Facebook has become integrated into young people’s everyday reflexive selves, and actions on Facebook blur the line between the digital and the physical (Lincoln & Robards 2017, p. 527). There are risks online, but young people also face risks in their everyday lives, in many different contexts.

Young people have historically been a group that society deems to be ‘at risk’. This view does not recognise young people’s agency in the online space. It de-humanises the space, implies it is a space out of young people’s control, and describes it as one in which young people can be vulnerable, manipulated and victimised. Therefore, there is a common perception among adults that this space, and young people’s behaviour and interactions, must be regulated. A dominant theme in existing research is that young people should be educated by adults about how to keep themselves ‘safe’ online. This point is simply stated by Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2001, p. 3013), who note that ‘youth should be instructed how to minimize their risk’. Hence the vulnerability of young people and their lack of expertise is promoted in emerging policy developments and public discourse that attempt to address young people’s safety online. This regulation, due to the dominant risk narrative, involves a desire to protect young people’s physical and mental well-being, and their developing senses of self and moral virtue. This risk narrative positions young people’s moral development as in need of guidance and protection. The desire to educate young people about online risks perpetuates adult-centric perspectives. These perspectives of ‘paternalism and protectionism [hinder] teens’ ability to become informed, thoughtful, and engaged adults’ (boyd 2014, p. 28). There is a lack of public commentary and academic research acknowledging young people’s agency and capacity to keep themselves safe online. This is an important area for research; as Belsey (2008, p. 19) states, ‘awareness and education are the keys’ to prevention. This point is also emphasised by Livingstone and Bober (2003, p. 27) who note the need for research to focus on prevention strategies to minimise harm to young people.

Hendry, Robards and Stanford (2017, p. 137) highlight the ‘lack of understanding of *how* young people use and understand social media’. This research looks beyond the negative adult-driven narrative of young people and risk on social media. To achieve this, I have taken a youth-centred approach to the topic, allowing young people to direct understandings of their experiences of risk on social media.

Putting young people and risk on the social work agenda

The concept of young people ‘at risk’ has become central to a range of discourses, both academic and professional (Sharland 2006, p. 247). Research and theoretical discussion about young people and risk is plentiful, but the voice of academic social work is missing from the

debate (Sharland 2006, p. 248). Sharland (2006, p. 247) asserts that social work has been ‘relatively silent’ on the topic of young people and their risk taking, and on the way that we ‘make’ or construct it. Sharland (2006, p. 248) highlights that there are gaps in social policy and social work’s current framing of young people and risk. There is difficulty in discerning the understandings that currently guide social work practice regarding young people and risk from the literature (Sharland 2006, p. 248). Absent from academic social work is a focus on the status of risk in young people’s lives, and on our understandings and responses to it (Sharland 2006, p. 248). According to Sharland (2006, p. 247), there is a need for critically reflective social work to develop an understanding of the ‘complex interplay of identity and agency, structure, culture and context that underpins young people’s risk taking’.

Lupton (1999b, p. 3) recognises risk as acting as a locus of blame in which risky groups are labelled as dangerous. Sharland (2006, p. 250) argues there is a clear case for questioning why young people are so often regarded as risky. It is not a question of whether young people are ‘at risk’, but how this view has become inflated and stereotyped to the point of moral panic (Sharland 2006, p. 250). Sharland (2006, p. 259) argues that further social work understanding of young people’s risk taking is needed. It is important for young people’s risk taking, risk making, and for our construction of young people as a risky business to be on the social work agenda (Sharland 2006, p. 256). Sharland (2006, p. 259) highlights three points regarding social work on this subject. Firstly, while there is a wide range of literature to inform social work thinking and practice on young people and on risk, little has been directly applied to young people’s risk taking: this is an opportunity for critical and reflexive social work practice (Sharland 2006, p. 259). Secondly, when considering young people and risk taking, young people should be considered agents of their own lives, ‘situated within their own social, material, cultural and relational worlds’ (Sharland 2006, p. 259). Closer attention is needed to what ‘risk taking means to young people, its dynamics, and the relationships and resources surrounding it’ (Sharland 2006, p. 260). Thirdly, it is important to not only consider what risk taking means in young people’s lives, but also what we make it in our professional minds and actions (Sharland 2006, p. 260). Academics and professionals should consider the distinctions between normal/abnormal risk, acceptable/unacceptable risk, and young people in trouble/young people as trouble (Sharland 2006, p. 260).

The significance of the research

This research is significant to many disciplines and various professions. It is beneficial to the fields of youth studies, social sciences, social work, teaching, information technology, research methods and wider academic fields. There is little academic social work discourse on this topic, but it is an important area for social workers to focus on. It is useful for social workers at both an eduction and practice level. Many social workers directly work with young people or meet with young people through their work. Through this research, social workers will gain an understanding of young people and online risk. This research will enhance practitioners' understanding of a core part of young people's social world, and will provide new knowledge to support practice.

The project encourages consideration of new ways of thinking about the discourse of young people and risk. The concept of risk and engagement with risk is inherent to social work theory and practice, as is the support of agency. Additionally, social research is an important element of the process of social work professionals instituting social change.

Further, the methods of this study are innovative, and will contribute to the developing methodological literature on the social scientific study of online technologies. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge about online research methods, focusing on netnography and online interviews. The use of such techniques contributes to education on advances within research methods, particularly in computer-mediated techniques. The methods utilised in this study will be fruitful for social work education on online research methods, because contemporary methods of online netnography and online interviews are utilised.

This research has significance and value because a youth-focused approach to young people and risk on social media is noticeably lacking. This research aims to generate new knowledge about young people's understandings and experiences of risk on social media. Young people are seen to benefit from this project, in that it allows them an opportunity to direct understandings of this topic. Current literature and debate on young people, risk and online technology, is dominated by adults and academics. This project, in contrast, is centred on young people's voices, their perspectives and experiences. This project aims to build on the body of knowledge that begins with and centres upon young people's viewpoints. As De Jong and Berg (2002, p. 249) emphasise, people 'must be accepted as they are'. Young people's

sense of agency was promoted within the research by allowing them to contribute as they pleased, giving as much or as little information as they wished. The participants had control over their own information, and their contributions were valued and respected.

Young people and social media

The rise and growth of social media has created a proliferation of online spaces where people gather (Ballantyne, Lowe & Beddoe 2017, p. 20). Boddy and Dominelli (2017, p. 180) describe social media as holding a 'sense of both permanence and impermanence'; the former due to information being stored permanently online, and the latter due to the speed at which information is replaced or updated (Boddy & Dominelli 2017, p. 180). Social media is a core feature of contemporary society, and young people are avid users of these spaces. In this section, I explore how young people use social media. I provide an insight into what is known about current habits and practices of young people on social media, revealing how social media has become entwined with young people's lives and why it is a major means of communication and social engagement.

Today's young people are surrounded by media, and have multiple technological means of accessing content, many of which are largely independent and unsupervised. Young people have television sets in their bedrooms, home computers, personal mobile phones with in-built cameras and Internet access, digital music players and game consoles connected to the Internet, and most high schools require students to have a personal laptop for use at school. Advances in technology have provided young people with the opportunity to be constantly connected.

For young people, using the Internet and communicating in the digital world is commonplace. Using the Internet is not optional, it is necessary to engage in social life. As the use of communication technologies grows, especially among young people, it is now a normal and natural part of their world (Belsey 2008; Price & Dalgleish 2010; Ralph et al. 2011; Wigand, Wood & Mande 2010). boyd (2007b, p. 2) describes online spaces, such as social media, as places for young people to 'hang out'. Walker and Bakopoulous (2004, p. 1) describe the Internet as 'an indispensable part of everyday life' and Robards (2012, p. 385) describes how, for young people, 'participation is now mandatory for inclusion amongst peer

groups'. Robards (2010, p. 1) also describes how choosing *not* to engage in social media 'can often equate to social exclusion'. Mahony (2013) uses the acronyms FOMO ('fear of missing out') and FONK ('fear of not knowing') to describe young people's motivation to constantly use social media. While young people share and engage online, it is also simply their presence that allows them to build relationships and stay connected (boyd 2007b, p. 1). In fact, users often leave their Facebook window open throughout the day to receive alerts (Wigand, Wood & Mande 2010, p. 8). The Internet is a central and indispensable element in the lives of today's young people (Lenhart et al. 2010, p. 5). As Robards (2012, p. 385) comments, 'large parts of their social lives have been played out on these sites'. Young people are the most 'wired' demographic group (Ralph et al. 2011, p. 38).

Connecting with friends on social media

Social media has opened the possibilities of new forms of dialogue and communication (Conole & Dyke 2004, p. 117). The popularity of social media has resulted in a significant shift in the way social interactions take place, and offers a new lens through which to understand human behaviour (Robards 2010, p. 1; Robards 2012, p. 386). Social media plays an important role in the establishment of friendships, and allows young people to connect to and learn more about new friends (Lenhart, Smith, Anderson, Duggan & Perrin 2015, p. 53). Social media is also a major way that young people interact with their existing friends (Lenhart et al. 2015, p. 53).

The relationships that are maintained on social media sites such as Facebook are largely from pre-existing networks formed offline (boyd & Ellison 2008; Madden et al. 2013; Robards 2012). Facebook friendship networks mostly mirror offline networks (Madden et al. 2013, p. 6). People's social networks are articulated and made visible through social networking sites (boyd & Ellison 2008, p. 211). These pre-existing networks replicated through these sites have become an important method of sustaining and strengthening social relationships (Robards 2010, p. 1). Lenhart et al. (2015, p. 53) emphasise that social media allows young people to feel better connected to their friends' feelings and to information about their friends' lives. Kozinets (2010, p. 24) asserts: 'longer-term online gatherings, particularly those where individual identities are revealed, would have tighter and more positive social relations than groups that are shorter-term and more anonymous'. Research by boyd (2007a,

2007b, 2008, 2010) shows that social networking sites allow for the continuation and articulation of relationships already in existence. Social networking sites 'operate under the assumption that affiliations are already pre-existing, and use technological connection to intensify' those links (Kozinets 2010, p. 32). There is a strong overlap between online and offline experiences, although there is still a tendency in Internet-related discussion to oppose the 'real' world with the 'online' or 'cyber' world (Nash & Peltu 2005, p. 11).

On social networking sites such as Facebook, profiles are undeniably centred on the individual (Robards 2010, p. 5). However, through these profiles, networks of people can share, discuss and remember the critical moments that punctuate the more mundane experiences of life (Robards 2012, p. 388). Young people have a strong urge to share as it gives them a sense of belonging (Harris 2005, p. 60). Harris (2005, p. 57) states that young people 'need to belong, to feel they are part of something larger than themselves, and to know that they matter to the group'. Through social networking sites, young people can 'form and perform a sense of self and belonging through socialization and communication' (Robards 2012, p. 394). Here, trust is an essential condition for fulfilling the potential of the online world (Myskja 2008, p. 218). Trust is needed online, and securing conditional trust is important for a well-functioning online society (Myskja 2008, p. 219). Through social media exchanges, people create a 'sense of being *with* each other and reinforce shared emotional experience across time and place' (Hjorth & Hendry 2015, p. 2).

Friendships are a highly valued part of young people's lives. Cave, Fildes, Luckett and Wearring (2015, p. 3) showed that young people in Australia placed great value on friendships, ranking them along with family as the thing they value most. A widely discussed relationship-group metric is Dunbar's number (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre 2011, p. 247). Robin Dunbar's theory on the cognitive limit on the number of relationships argues that most people can only manage up to one hundred and fifty connections or relationships. This theory seems to be contested by the sheer number of connections that users make and maintain with the help of social media. Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 247) write: 'Social media platforms have recognized that many communities grow well beyond this number, and offer tools that allow users to manage membership'. Madden et al. (2013, p. 2) report that the typical (median) young person has 300 Facebook friends. Social network sites, such as Facebook, combine various social relations into the single category of 'friend', and therefore 'friendship' on these sites does not equate precisely to more traditional

understandings of the term (Robards 2013, p. 224). Similarly, boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 213) highlight that the term ‘friends’ can be misleading, as the connection does not necessarily mean friendship in the everyday sense.

In addition, young people also often use social media to seek online support from friends on social media. Social media allows young people opportunities to receive social support from friends online. Lenhart et al. (2015, p. 56) report that 68 per cent of young people, more often girls than boys, have received support from their friends on social media during challenging or tough times.

Young people’s online identities

Giddens (1991, p. 5) discusses how people are reflexively engaged with their own identities. Giddens (1991, p. 14) stresses that each person not only has a biography, but lives this biography, pointing to a sense of individual control. People continually revise their own biographical narratives, which is central to the structuring of self-identity (Giddens 1991, p. 5). This reflexive process, involving connecting personal and social change through consideration, leads to the construction of an altered and revised self (Giddens 1991, p. 33). Giddens (1991, p. 4) points to the media as playing a central role in mediated experiences, which influences both self-identity and social relations. This self-development is more pronounced with the development of mass communication, particularly electronic communication (Giddens 1991, p. 4). As Sharland (2006, p. 253) comments: ‘Individuals are forced to interpret diverse, unpredictable experiences in order to establish their own coherent biographies’.

Young people’s risk taking and experimentation are necessary parts of the individualisation process, required for the full achievement of identity (Erikson 1968, 1980). Risk taking is characteristically bound up with the development of young people’s identities (Sharland 2006, p. 260). This experimentation is often played out by young people online, particularly through social media. Online connections provide a window into the inner lives of people, and social media is ‘laden with pieces of self’ (Harris 2005, p. 51). Robards (2013, p. 218) states that ‘identity is constructed and performed’ online. Social networking sites allow young people to consciously construct an online representation of self (boyd & Ellison 2008,

p. 219). Self-development is played out online in spaces such as social media, where young people engage in creative and expressive forms of behaviour and identity seeking (McLoughlin & Lee 2007, p. 667). Young people are aware of their online reputations and 'take steps to curate the content and appearance of their social media presence' (Madden et al. 2013, p. 8). The pruning and revising of profiles by young people is an important part of their online identity management (Madden et al. 2013, p. 9).

Lincoln and Robards (2017, p. 518) argue that Facebook profiles represent visual manifestations of Giddens' (1991) reflexive project of self. Facebook is a crucial site on which life narratives are 'constructed, shared, reflected upon, and potentially revised' (Lincoln & Robards 2017, p. 518). Reflexive identity work on Facebook involves young people revising, re-ordering and editing their digital traces (Lincoln & Robards 2017, p. 523). Facebook profiles are significant life archives for young people, which they reflexively re-order to align them with their sense of self and how they want to share this with others (Lincoln & Robards 2017, p. 530).

As Lenhart et al. (2015, p. 58) state: 'Online profiles and presence are constructed things for youth'. On social media, young people can show different sides of themselves that they cannot show offline (Lenhart et al. 2015, p. 58). However, those same presentations of self aren't always considered to be authentic to peers, with 77 per cent of young people agreeing that people are less authentic on social media than they are offline (Lenhart et al. 2015, p. 59). Kant (1983, cited in Myskja 2008, p. 216) discusses how people become actors, pretending to be better than they are – but no one is fooled by these deceptions, they are instead expected. In this way, mistrust remains an integral part of human interaction and communication (Myskja 2008, p. 216). Such deception, when done as part of a social game, is acceptable, and could be termed well-intentioned (Myskja 2008, p. 217). Myskja (2008, p. 217) argues that there is a trust online that depends on the fact that self-censorship or deception is exercised: we deceive, and know those who we communicate with know we deceive and vice versa. People then communicate online with others not as they are, but as they want to be (Myskja 2008, p. 217). As boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 219) note, most sites encourage users to construct an accurate representation of themselves, but people do this to varying degrees.

Hendry, Robards and Stanford (2017, p. 143) highlight the affordance of 'storying self' on Facebook. They describe how Facebook creates a space in which people can present stories

of self, and which allows for self-reflection (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 143). Hendry (2014, p. 3) has shown that self-representation on social media sites 'affords the opportunity to make visible what is socially invisible'. In her research, Hendry (2014, p. 1) challenges the idea of the self-portrait as exposed narcissism. Hendry (2014, p. 1) highlights how there has been much derision of young people's selfie practices, in which they have even been labelled 'morally dangerous' acts. However, this is a moral judgement without concern for young people's well-being and without active engagement with them (Hendry 2014, p. 1). The ambivalence towards young people's self-imaging practices and erasure of young people's agency is not new (Hendry 2014, p. 1).

Research on young people on social media

A study by the Australian Government (2013) titled 'Like, post, share – Young Australians' experience of social media' demonstrated that young people are avid users of the Internet. Participants were aged eight to 17. When looking at rates of Internet access, 100 per cent of the 16 to 17-year-olds had accessed the Internet in the past four weeks. Young people accessed the Internet at home (93–97 per cent) and at school (64–75 per cent), and Internet access at friends' houses was seen to increase with age (Australian Government 2013, p. 6). Also seen to increase with age was the importance of the Internet to young people. Social networking was demonstrated to be a major way to spend time online, and again the figures increased with age. The 12 to 13-year-olds' Internet usage included study (95 per cent), searching for and listening to music (77 per cent), and social networking (69 per cent). The 14 to 15-year-olds' usage consisted of study (94 per cent), social networking (86 per cent) and searching for and listening to music (83 per cent). The 16–17-year-olds' used the Internet for social networking (92 per cent), searching for and listening to music (91 per cent) and study (90 per cent). Most online experiences were viewed as positive, with reports that the Internet made them always feel good (52–57 per cent) and mostly feel good (37–41 per cent). The percentage of young people feeling they had bad experiences online was low, with six to seven per cent reporting this (Australian Government 2013, p. 7). Social networking, with Facebook the favourite, was reported by participants as being done via computer and mobile device. For the young people in this study, rates of social networking were high: 99 per cent of 16 to 17-year-olds' had engaged with social media, and 71 per cent of this age group used it daily. Just over half of the 16 to 17-year-olds' accessed social networking on their mobile

device daily (Australian Government 2013, p. 8). Recent research from the UK also reports a high percentage of young people on social media, with 93 per cent of 16 to 24-year-old's having a social media profile, which has increased by 39 per cent over seven years (Ofcom 2015, p. 32).

Research on American young people finds similarly high rates of use and increases in numbers engaging with the Internet and with social media correlated with age (Lenhart et al. 2010; Pieters & Krupin 2010). Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 6) demonstrated in their research that age is a strong predictor of how much time young people spend online. Results of their study showed that two out of three 13–15-year-old's and three out of four 16 to 17-year-old's logged on to the Internet six or seven days a week. Lenhart et al. (2010, p. 7) also reported high rates, with 63 per cent of teens going online every day. Less traditional means of accessing the Internet are being taken up by young people, encouraged by the rise of mobile access. As Lenhart et al. (2010, p. 8) acknowledge, 'internet connectivity is increasingly moving off the desktop and into the mobile and wireless environment'. Lenhart et al. (2010, p. 4) report that three quarters (75 per cent) of teens now have a mobile phone, and that even those as young as 12 (58 per cent) have their own mobile, making getting online even easier for young people. According to Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 7), one in five young people are using mobile phones or video gaming consoles to access the Internet, in addition to the large majority who use computers (99 per cent) to connect. Linked to the uptake of Internet use through mobile technology is the rate of young people using the Internet outside of their homes, with 85 per cent of young people doing so (Pieters & Krupin 2010, p. 7). Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 8) attribute the high rates of young people accessing the Internet to the popularity of communicating online through email and social networking. Their study showed that 85 per cent of young people communicated online in some way, with 66 per cent using email and 61 per cent engaged in social networking (Pieters & Krupin 2010, p. 8). Lenhart et al. (2010, p. 2) reported even higher social networking rates among teens, with 73 per cent using social networking websites.

More recent research by the Australian Government (2016) showed that 82 per cent of teens (aged 14 to 17) use social media and that 90 per cent of those teens use Facebook. On average, teenagers have three social media accounts, and 61 per cent of young people choose to keep a private profile on their main social media account (Australian Government 2016). This research showed that teens shared more personal information on social media than

younger ‘kids’ (aged eight to 13). Information shared by teens included: photos of face (58 per cent); last name (45 per cent); real age (38 per cent); school/photo of uniform (27 per cent); and phone number/address (9 per cent). Young people described the ‘upside of social media’ as including: staying connected to friends and family; entertainment; keeping up to date; planning social life; and self-expression (Australian Government 2016). Young people described the ‘downside of social media’ as including: nasty comments; inappropriate or hurtful content; nothing; feeling they have to keep checking it; and fear of missing out (Australian Government 2016).

Social media is a primary method for today’s young people to communicate and share information (Pieters & Krupin 2010, p. 12). Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 12) report that their research showed Facebook to be the most popular social media site for every age group of young people they investigated. According to Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 12), as kids get older and become more engaged with social media, they update their status more regularly, and girls are more likely than boys to have a social networking account, and are more likely to update their statuses more regularly. Interestingly, although Facebook officially requires you to be at least 13 years old to join the site, there are no clear ways that this is monitored or controlled. Research by Christofides, Muise and Desmarais (2010, p. 45) revealed that children nine years old and even younger reported using Facebook.

Social networking through social media has become a large part of young people’s social lives. Participating in social media has become ‘normative’ (boyd 2014, p. 7), and it ‘plays a crucial role in the lives of networked teens’ (boyd 2014, p. 5). As Robards (2012, p. 387) writes, ‘their experiences of growing up – regardless of whether they are mediated online or offline – are often recorded online, through social network sites like MySpace and Facebook, by way of the digital trace’. Software company McAfee (2010, p. 4) describes today’s young people as ‘online pros who know how to navigate through content, play games, and use communication services’. The Internet has developed into such a conventional aspect of our lives that it infiltrates young people’s everyday lives through many mediums, often simultaneously. Roberts and Foehr (2008, p. 13) discuss how young people ‘media multitask’. Media multitasking refers to the concurrent use of multiple media, which results in young people spending significantly longer being exposed to media content than actually *using* media (Roberts & Foehr 2008, p. 13). It would not be unusual to find a young person on their laptop with multiple websites open, engaged in multiple social media sites, available

on messenger programs to chat with others, with music playing from their iPod, the TV on in the background, and receiving texts through their mobile phone, all at the same time. Roberts and Foehr (2008, p. 28) found that a large majority of young people (81 per cent) report sharing at least some of their media time between two or more media concurrently. The computer could be described as a media multitasking station, as it has the capacity to offer multiple windows on multiple activities (Roberts & Foehr 2008, p. 30).

Mahony (2013) reports that today's young people in Australia are 'content, conservative and comfortable with the status quo, eschewing previous generations' 'rebellious youth' stereotype'. Today's young people have been labelled many things, including Generation Y, Yers, the Millennial Generation or Millennials, the Digital Generation, the Net Generation, the Media Generation, iGen and digital natives (Gordon 2006; Kropp 2012; McAfee 2010; McQueen 2007; Roberts & Foehr 2008; Twenge 2017). Bloch (2012, para 1) describes Generation Y as those who 'grew up in the prime age of technology: the dot-com boom, the continuing sophistication of the mobile phone, the rise of Apple, music file sharing, and the birth of social media'. Young people are viewed as the 'digital generation' who can communicate through text, audio and visual material (Livingstone & Bober 2003, p. 5; Stanley 2001, p. 2). The label 'Media Generation' also fits, as more than any past generation, today's young people have access to a wide and still expanding array of media through many means, and they devote more time to media than any other activity apart from sleep (Roberts & Foehr 2008, p. 30). Young people have been described as technologically savvy (Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak 2001, p. 3011). McQueen (2007, p. 44) talks about 'Generation Y' as being well educated, ambitious, tolerant, tech-savvy, and socially aware.

McAfee (2010, p. 3) states that: 'Today's young people are "digital natives" who grew up with the Internet and use it more skillfully and comfortably than many adults – for communication, education, and entertainment'. In contrast to these 'digital natives' are those of previous generations who could be viewed as 'digital immigrants' (Prensky 2001), people who choose to use social media having existed in a world without it. With the rise of new technologies and new social media platforms, there is said to be a 'generational digital divide' or 'cyber-gap' between children and parents. Children are often in a position where they understand and are more adept in the use of certain technologies than their parents (Byron 2008, p. 23). This divide can result in adults feeling disempowered and anxious about such technology use (Byron 2008, p. 23). Kelly (2000, p. 473) argues that 'adult anxieties

about the public and private behaviors and dispositions of young people mean that youth looms large and threateningly in community perceptions and in various policy areas and academic disciplines'.

What is clear from the statistics available on young people's online usage is that it is an ever-present, regular constant in their lives. As Roberts and Foehr (2008, p. 12) acknowledge, with so much media content available, it is not surprising that young people devote so much of their time engaging with it. Research also indicates that as young people age, their use of the Internet increases and involves more time on social media. As technology continues to advance and the Internet and social media evolve, it is sure to filter into more people's lives in more ways. Although specific technologies and social media spaces change over time, the organising principles are not different, and collectively provide young people with a space to hang out and connect with friends (boyd 2014, p. 5). The terms 'social media' and 'social networking' are now simply part of our culture (Fabricant 2013, para 1). Social media sites have not only increased the possibility of enhanced sociability and inclusion, they have infiltrated our lives to the point where participation has, for many, become mandatory (Robards 2012, p. 387). The amount of time young people spend online and the unregulated nature of that space has created concerns about young people's safety. Hence, when talking about young people's use of social media, including spaces such as Facebook, there is a dominant narrative of young people being 'at risk'.

Conceptual framework

There is a need for the topic of young people and risk on social media to be considered in new ways. The dominant narrative that pervades understandings of young people and risk online seems highly paternalistic and is often framed in negative terms, highlighting social media as a risky space and positioning young people as vulnerable. Adult concerns do have legitimacy, particularly when online activities have been connected with bullying, harm and suicide. However, paternalistic notions of young people online dominate discussions and result in young people's voices being suppressed. I wondered if this dominant negative narrative might be exaggerated and/or incomplete. To move beyond the dominant adult-driven perspectives, I adopted a conceptual framework for this research that is youth-centred and influenced by the sociocultural theory of risk.

I took a youth-centred approach to this research to foreground the voices of young people. Young people are a group that often face significant difficulty in getting their voices heard and valued (Haynes & Tanner 2015, p. 357). Often, their voices are missing from discussions of young people on social media. As Dunkels, Franberg and Hallgren (2011, p. 2) state: 'There is a growing suspicion that we might have left out the young perspective when we discuss online risk and safety'. Adult-centric views dominate discussions. Young people's voices are not treated as significant when exploring the topic of risk on social media, and this presents a major gap in the existing research and literature. Young people's voices and experiences have been marginalised, and their perspectives have been sidelined. Their knowledge has been treated as trivial, rather than central. It is short-sighted to consider this matter without young people's voices. Young people are the experts on their own experiences, and we cannot fully understand their experiences without taking a youth-centred approach.

Allen (2009, p. 396) describes youth-centred research as 'giving young people a central and autonomous conceptual status'. A key person within debates about young people online is danah boyd (2014), who adopts a youth-centred approach and treats young people as experts. Canty, Stubbe, Steers and Collings (2016) highlight the importance of child-centred research into bullying. Canty et al. (2016, p. 54) discuss how children's definitions are often considered 'less valid interpretations of their experiences', which 'marginalises their competence as reliable reporters of those experiences. It obscures interactions they may define as bullying that may not fit the conventional definition and highlight interactions adults include as bullying but are not experienced as such by them'. This mirrors the context of my research, as it is suggested neither young people's voices nor their understandings of risk and experiences of risk on social media have been valued. Therefore, in this research, I placed young people at the centre by making my conceptual framework and methodology youth-centred. Young people were my only participants, meaning that young people's voices were given prominence. Through observing their practices and speaking with young people about their practices, my research valued young people's voices and placed their understandings and experiences at its core.

For this research, I adopted a sociocultural perspective of risk, which foregrounds the idea that the perception of risk is a social process and highlights the cultural dimensions of risk (Douglas 1985, 1992; Douglas and Wildavsky 1982). Notions of risk are created through

culture, and largely shaped by and perceived through social interactions. Risks are 'socially selected' through a culture of shared knowledges and values (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 14). Shared values and concerns lead to the classification of risks within a culture (Lupton 1999a, p. 39). The sociocultural theory of risk highlights that people are not isolated individuals but act as social beings and follow social rules (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, p. 80). A sociocultural perspective on risk contributes to a communal rather than an individualistic notion of risk (Lupton 1999a, p. 38). Public perception of risks and acceptable levels of risk are collective constructs (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 186). Applying the sociocultural theory of risk to young people on social media requires exploring how young people perceive and co-construct notions of risk through interacting with other young people on social media. Adopting this theory also necessitates the exploration of how risk is engaged with through their social interactions. I argue that young people and risk on social media cannot be adequately explored in isolation from their cultural context. Risk is situated within the interactional cultural context of social media. Adopting a sociocultural approach means that the methods must allow for exploration of how risk is understood and engaged with within culture; therefore a netnography, which is a specialised form of online ethnography, was conducted.

Research aim and questions

This research aimed to explore the silenced narrative of young people and online risks by privileging their voices through a youth-centred approach. I adopted this standpoint to explore and understand the everyday social media practices of young people using Facebook. A youth-centred approach to young people and risk on social media is noticeably absent from the existing literature. Drawing on sociocultural theories of risk, I analysed how risk is created, understood and experienced through the online interactions of young people. Thus, using a youth-centred approach, I asked the primary question:

- How do young people engage with risk through their everyday practices on Facebook?

I also asked three sub questions:

- What are the everyday practices of young people on Facebook?

- How do young people understand risk in their everyday practices on Facebook?
- How do young people interact with risk in their everyday practices on Facebook?

These kinds of questions are conducive to exploratory research. Brewer (2007, p. 14) states that the focus of an exploratory study is gaining more information and insights about a subject when there is insufficient knowledge of it. This research, which is an exploratory study, aimed to address knowledge gaps in the area of young people and risk online. It also aimed to provide new knowledge to inform the topic of young people and risk on social media. This research contributes to a more integrated approach to consideration of these matters.

Structure and content of the thesis

The structure and content of the thesis are as follows. The following two chapters comprise the literature review. The first, Chapter Two, conceptualises young people and risk. I begin that chapter with a focus on constructing young people's stages of development, and how they are often regarded to be 'at risk'. I discuss how young people naturally take risks, and also how responsibilities for risk are located with individuals. Despite this, young people are not often regarded as responsible, instead there is a need to protect 'at risk' young people. These ideas highlight the discourse of risk as risk correlated with danger and thus something to avoid. This excludes considerations of risk having positive attributes. Positive risk taking and the dignity of risk are then discussed. I then theorise on the concept of risk, highlighting the sociocultural theory of risk through the risk society thesis and the cultural theory of risk.

The second literature chapter, Chapter Three, focuses on young people and risk online. The chapter highlights how the Internet is regarded as a risky space, and how young people are seen to be 'at risk' online. Literature has shown how young people engage in 'risky' behaviours online, and these are presented in the third chapter. I also highlight concerns about young people's morality being 'at risk' online. The dominant risk narrative about young people and risk on social media has resulted in a social media panic. This narrative is adult-centric and highly paternalistic – young people's voices are clearly missing. I highlight some research that has moved beyond a deficit focus and has given attention to young people's

voices; however, I argue that a more complex exploration of young people and risk on social media is needed.

Chapter Four outlines the methods used in this youth-centred research informed by the sociocultural theory of risk. I begin by revisiting the aim of the research and the research questions. I then outline the methodology. For this research, I adopted a qualitative approach and conducted a netnography (an ethnographic study conducted online), to explore young people's engagement with risk on Facebook. The research setting of social media, and its affordances, and Facebook are discussed. Next, the sampling and recruitment framework is presented. Data collection methods are then outlined, explaining the two data collection stages: Stage One involved the creation of a research profile and collection of textual data; Stage Two involved online interviews with a subset of the Stage One participants. This chapter then outlines the data analysis involved in the research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the ethical considerations of the research.

Chapters Five, Six and Seven present the findings. The results of this study indicate that participants engaged with risk on Facebook as an everyday experience of their online presence. However, analysis of the data clarifies that young people actively engaged in their own risk practices by 'knowing and unknowing risks' and 'making and taking risks'. Chapter Five presents data on young people's everyday practices on Facebook, which involved: being visible and accessible; managing accounts, connections and content; connecting with others; participating in group trends; showing their sense of self; and sharing issues of importance. These were the common practices of young people and provided a context for their engagement with risks online. Chapter Six focuses on young people 'knowing' and 'unknowing' risk on Facebook. Young people demonstrated 'knowing' risk through recognising risks and 'unknowing' risks through reframing and normalising them. Chapter Seven presents the findings on young people 'making and taking' risks on Facebook, which young people demonstrated through connection practices, content practices, and collective practices.

Chapter Eight is a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature. The chapter begins with a discussion focused on *understanding* young people's engagement with risk. I then discuss the *meanings* of young people's engagement with risk. The research findings show that, overall, these types of engagement reflect how ideas about risk on Facebook are co-constructed, which is intertwined with identity formation and the need for belonging.

Importantly, the results illustrate that violence was an everyday experience for participants, and that their everyday online practices were gendered.

The conclusion is the ninth and final chapter. I argue that my research demonstrates the need to re-frame the common adult-centric narrative about young people and risk online. It is necessary to take a youth-centred approach to the topic, to dissolve polarised dichotomies, and to acknowledge that young people have agency. I discuss the implications of these conclusions in this final chapter. The chapter concludes by acknowledging the assumptions and limitations of this research.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained my motivations for the research. I discussed the personal experiences that led me to consider this topic and highlighted the necessity of the research. I also pointed out the need for this topic to be on the social work agenda and discussed the significance of the research. Data on young people's Internet usage were presented, showing the popularity of social media among young people, and their prevalence on it. I also identified the conceptual framework for this research: one that is youth-centred and informed by the sociocultural theory of risk. The research aim and questions were presented, and the structure and content of the thesis, comprising the following eight chapters, provided.

I have introduced the research and provided a backdrop for the thesis. The common narrative of young people and risk on social media is adult-driven and paternalistic. Young people are often considered to be an 'at risk' group, vulnerable to the dangers of the Internet and social media. This dominating perspective overshadows other ways to view young people online. This research aimed to explore a youth-centred approach to the topic of young people and risk on social media. My research contributes to filling this gap in the research by exploring how young people engage with risk on Facebook. I develop the argument for a more complex exploration of the topic of young people and risk on social media in the following two chapters.

Chapter Two: Conceptualising Young People and Risk

The focus of this research is young people and risk on social media. The research question is: How do young people engage with risk through their everyday practices on Facebook? I begin this chapter by focusing on how the stages of development of young people are constructed and how young people are viewed in terms of risk. Young people are often categorised as an 'at risk' group who engage in risky behaviours. Young people are a group that naturally take risks, and here I highlight risk responsibility, showing that individuals are responsible for their own decisions about risk. However, risk responsibility is not often applied to young people; instead there is a paternalistic desire to protect 'at risk' young people. Young people are viewed as vulnerable and in need of guidance from and protection by adults. Literature on young people and risk reflects a discourse that conceptualises risk as something bad and to be avoided. This discourse overshadows understandings of risk as having some positive attributes. Positive risk taking is discussed, and the importance of the dignity of risk is presented. Having highlighted risk as it relates to young people, I then theorise the concept of risk through the sociocultural theory of risk. The risk society thesis has been influential on understandings of risk. Risk is everywhere and we are all vulnerable to it. However, the risk society thesis falls short, I argue, in that it describes risk as a fixed idea and fails to account for the cultural aspects of risk understandings. I therefore present the cultural theory of risk and highlight how risk is perceived through social interactions based on common values and experiences.

Constructing young people's stages of development

As Byron (2008, p. 35) states: 'Children grow and develop in a linear fashion and there are certain characteristics about children of each age that can be useful guidelines'. Byron (2008, p. 35) also acknowledges that the rate of growth can vary enormously between each child, so while it is possible to make generalisations, there will always be disparities between

individuals. Children's vulnerabilities to different risks will change as they develop and grow (Byron 2008, p. 34). In line with generational dimensions of youth, the frontal cortex of the brain develops through childhood and into early adulthood, and those with a less developed frontal cortex are 'less efficient at reasoning because they have yet to develop their critical evaluation skills […] are worse at inhibiting irrelevant information and also do not regulate their social behaviours well' (Byron 2008, p. 35). During this period of adolescence, functional improvements are also seen in 'selective attention, working memory, problem solving, [and] multi-tasking […] and [this] is facilitated by socialising and risk taking' (Byron 2008, p. 35).

France (2000, p. 320) describes adolescence as a developmental phase involving body changes, intellectual growth and emotional independence, all of which contribute to achieving a sense of self. Byron (2008, p. 38) explains how young people aged 15 to 18 years are in the last stage of 'childhood', where they may still be the responsibility of their parents but are also seen as young adults. At this developmental stage, 'their brain functioning is extremely close to that of an adult and so they can master abstract thinking and develop theories to explain and make sense of things' (Byron 2008, p. 38). Byron (2008, p. 38) explains that: 'There are no longer the inherent restrictions of brain development that lead to difficulties with evaluating information or making judgments'. Similarly, France (2000, p. 321) asserts that as young people move closer to adulthood, they develop their rational and cognitive skills which assist them to understand risks and dangers.

Psychodynamic models of adolescence are underpinned by some assumptions about what it means to be young (France 2000, p. 321). Firstly, it is commonly accepted that the transitional phase of adolescence is a natural and universal experience during which the young move from childhood to adulthood. Secondly, this phase is assumed to be a dangerous period, involving experimentation, and storm and stress. Thirdly, this notion of adolescence assumes a 'pre-social self', and that during this time the self is found and developed. Fourthly, adolescence is considered a period of irrationality during which cognitive skills remain underdeveloped (France 2000, p. 322).

The determinist viewpoint of adolescence presented above has been challenged. It is instead argued that what it means to be young can vary across culture and generation, that identity construction is an ongoing process which can occur before, during and after the period deemed to be 'youth', and that identity construction is not only affected by physiological

changes, but also by social and cultural factors (France 2000, p. 323). Social change affects all groups of people, not just members of one generation; generations are not free-floating cohorts in a society (France & Roberts 2015, p. 222). Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn (1998, p. 692) also argue that childhood is socially constructed rather than being fundamental to the state of being a child.

Robards (2012, p. 387) argues that as 'a categorical or developmental 'stage', the concept of youth is largely untenable'. Age development is a fluid space. Framing youth as a process of transition and understanding youth as a social process is a better way to view the transitions experienced by young people (Henderson, Holland, McGrellis, Sharpe & Thomson 2007; Robards 2012; White, Wyn & Robards 2017). Viewing youth as a social process suggests that 'the meaning of age and how it is experienced is a result of the interaction between biological processes and the social, physical, political and economic environment' (White, Wyn & Robards 2017, p. 33). Viewing youth as a developmental phase perpetuates the idea of 'adulthood as a destination' and positions youth as a deficient state that will be completed upon reaching adulthood (White, Wyn & Robards 2017, p. 36). Considering youth as a social process allows value to be placed on young people, and implies that youth matters (White, Wyn & Robards 2017, p. 42). It is more useful, France and Roberts (2015, p. 227) suggest, to explore the interrelationship between the micro and macro processes that underpin the everyday practices of young people. It is commonly accepted that youth is a time in which major transitions are to be negotiated, both regarding the internal self and the expectations of the external world (Sharland 2006, p. 252).

Young people 'at risk'

Through a risk lens, others can be seen to be 'at risk' or 'a risk' (Stanford 2010, p. 1073). The way in which we view ourselves and others is dominated by 'polarised identities that cumulate around notions of risk' (Stanford 2010, p. 1066). People who are 'at risk' are viewed in terms of vulnerability, and those who are 'a risk' are considered in terms of their dangerousness. Risk can thus be personalised and attached to people rather than contexts (Stanford 2010, p. 1070). Such risk thinking frames up how people understand each other, and therefore vulnerability and dangerousness become major ways in which people are considered and categorised. The ways in which we view other people in terms of risk are

important in the context of young people as a group, as they are more often framed as ‘at risk’.

Young people are key subjects of contemporary discussions of risk. Sharland (2006, p. 247) states that ‘youth is constructed as a risky business’. The terms ‘youth’ and ‘risk’ have become intertwined with an almost constant demonisation of young people (Kemshall, Boeck & Fleming 2009, p. 39). Young people are a group who are framed in risky terms and regarded to be an ‘at risk’ group. As Hendry (2014, p. 1) emphasises, ‘Young people are, by definition, not powerful’.

Young people have long been a target for risk thinking, and are commonly regarded to be ‘at risk’ (as in danger of becoming victims) or ‘a risk’ (as a danger to others). Young people as a group are associated with being ‘at risk’ for a range of reasons, including age, alcohol and drug use, sexual activity, mental health issues, self-harm and suicidal behaviour, abuse, and other social problems. Young people are often regarded, or even demonised, as a risky population, either by definition, or by virtue of the world they live in (Sharland 2006, p. 249). Sharland (2006, p. 247) comments on how policymakers, professionals and the public have become increasingly concerned with identifying and managing young people who are ‘at risk’, but also with those who are troubling or risky. Young people are ‘at risk’ of significant harms and in danger of presenting risk to others or their own preferred futures (Sharland 2006, p. 250). Taken further, young people are often considered to be risky not only to themselves but to ‘us’ (Sharland 2006, p. 251). Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn (1998, p. 689) also point to the paradoxical perception of children as both ‘at risk’ and as a potential threat to other young people and to the broader social order.

Risk-taking and responsibility

According to Lupton (1999a, p. 115), today’s young people, compared with those of 30 or 40 years ago, ‘are faced with a greater range of uncertainties and choices to make about how to conduct their lives’. A major concern is that young people are engaging in behaviours that may jeopardise their desired futures (Kelly 2000, p. 468). It is important then, to consider the development of judgement in the context of brain development in adolescence. Adolescence refers to the period of transition from childhood to adulthood (Dumontheil 2016, p. 39).

During this time, changes occur in brain structure and function (Fuhrmann, Knoll & Blakemore 2015, p. 558) which lead to unique adolescent patterns of brain responses and behaviour (Dumontheil 2016, p. 39). Blakemore (2012, p. 404) states that adolescence is considered ‘a period of continued neural development’. During adolescence, much brain development occurs within ‘particular brain regions and systems that are key to the regulation of behavior and emotion and to the perception and evaluation of risk and reward’ (Steinberg 2005, p. 69). According to Steinberg (2008, p. 78) risk taking inceases between childhood and adolescence due to changes in the ‘brain’s socio-emotional system leading to increased reward-seeking’.

Young people are an age group who naturally experiment and take risks (Kelly 2000, p. 465). Risk taking is a normal transitional behavior, part of normal development, occurring in adolescence (Sharland 2006, p. 252). According to Byron (2008, p. 20):

> Risk taking is part of child development – part of our drive to learn and to succeed. Particularly in adolescence, risk taking is not only a developmental imperative but also a lifestyle choice: it is driven by developments taking place in the brain and it is an important part of identity construction.

From a psychological perspective, risk taking is a part of development, especially identity development, producing both positive and negative consequences (Sharland 2006, p. 252). From a sociological perspective, young people are risky due to the environment around them (Sharland 2006, p. 252).

Risk taking by young people can arise from a natural desire for pleasure; to achieve excitement and thrills in their lives (Hendry, Shucksmith, Love & Glendinning 1993). Furthermore, a basic developmental psychological need related to gaining autonomy is fulfilled in late adolescence through risk taking (France 2000, p. 319). This involves young people forming their own identities and distancing themselves from parents and others (France 2000, p. 319). Therefore, choosing to take risks may have both positive outcomes of developmental autonomy and negative outcomes of exposure to danger (France 2000, p. 319). France (2000, p. 320) suggests that risk taking by young people is founded in two dimensions: firstly, it is greatly influenced by personality and biography; secondly, it is connected to young people’s lifestyle and cultural relationships, in particular, peer groups and parents (France 2000, p. 320). Young people may choose to take risks as a means of being

accepted or of ‘fitting in’, leading to social acceptance and safety (France 2000, p. 328). Peers are powerful mediators of young people’s risk choices (Sharland 2006, p. 257).

Making decisions that involve risk taking relies on various cognitive processes, such as estimating probability, weighing alternatives, and judging outcomes (Dror, Katona & Mungur 1998, p. 68). Dror, Katona and Mungur (1998, p. 70) compared decision making that involved risk taking between young and elderly people and found that both groups took calculated risks, reflected through a systematic decrease in risk taking when the risk levels increased. Interestingly, it was demonstrated that young participants considered more options than the elderly in the timeframe provided, resulting in their making higher quality decisions (Dror, Katona & Mungur 1998, p. 70). As Kemshall, Boeck and Fleming (2009, p. 43) highlight: ‘Knowledge of a risk does not necessarily mean we will act on it or necessarily choose what outsiders consider to be the most rational course of action’. France (2000, p. 328) suggests that for adults, risk taking is seen as normal and acceptable. However, the same perspective is not often applied to young people. Those who deviate from the norm significantly are typically identified and labelled to be ‘at risk’ (Lupton 1999b, p. 4). Also, parents who are advocates for young adventurers, those who take risks, are condemned for supporting such endeavours when the outcome is not known (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 273).

France (2000, p. 317) asserts that in this ‘dangerous world’, development of new ways to manage and negotiate everyday life is required. Due to security and certainty being threatened, individuals have become more concerned with both preventing risk and removing it from their lives (France 2000, p. 317). There is a connection between risk and responsibility (Beck 1999, p. 6). Within the risk society thesis, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, there is debate over whether individuals should give their responsibility to and put trust in experts or keep that responsibility to protect their own safety. Risk is widely used to describe things that are outside of the norm, misfortunate happenings and frightful events (Lupton 1999a, p. 3). Such descriptions of risk assume some human responsibility and that something can be done to prevent it (Lupton 1999a, p. 3). Risk theory argues that individuals are responsible for managing their own risk. Lupton (1999b, p. 4) describes how people place importance on having control over their lives and making decisions for themselves about risk. Individuals in contemporary society engage in a heightened risk awareness and are expected to assess and manage risks (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 88). Pinter (2003, p. 37) describes risk as involving three elements: calculation of the

probability of events and reducing uncertainty; decision making based on calculation; and future orientation as a result of decisions and actions. People believe they can understand risk, recognise risks, and make decisions to protect themselves. In the risk society world, you cannot escape your own responsibility for risk. People are responsible for making decisions on whether they actively engage with risk or retreat from it. This discussion suggests a level of agency in thinking and making decisions about risk. Individuals are, as Lupton (1999b, p. 4) describes, 'positioned as choosing agents'. While risk taking is a natural part of being young, and people are considered to be responsible for their own decisions about risk, young people are often viewed as not responsible for their risk decisions. This stems from a protective and paternalistic viewpoint.

Protecting 'at risk' young people

Risks are considered more maleficent and graver when they threaten children's well-being (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 86; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 691). Children are perceived to be 'at risk', but so is childhood itself (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 86). Childhood is portrayed as a precious and cherished stage of life under threat from those who would interfere or harm, and from those children who refuse to remain childlike (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 86). Jackson and Scott (1999, p. 86) state that children are thought of as a 'protected species and childhood as a protected state'. This perspective results in imperatives to protect, monitor, contain and sustain young people as they transition to adulthood (Sharland 2006, p. 248). Young people are viewed as vulnerable innocents to be shielded from the dangers of the wider social world (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 691). Jackson and Scott (1999, p. 87) highlight how childhood is considered to be a 'special, protected category of being'. It is an age of innocence and vulnerability that adults are obligated and expected to protect (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 95). Risks to children are viewed as more significant than risks to adults, and therefore a concern for the safety of children dominates (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 90). Safeguarding children keeps danger at bay and protects against any threats (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 86). Public concerns about children being in danger or a danger themselves reflect risk anxiety as much as the actual danger itself (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 92).

Anxieties associated with childhood are a result of a general understanding that the social world is less stable and less predictable (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 88). Safety and predictability can no longer be applied to the experience of childhood. (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 89). Risk anxiety regarding children may be heightened as a result of the developmental paradigm that is central to modern constructions of childhood (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 89). Childhood is considered a natural state, yet at the same time it is seen to be continually 'at risk' (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 97). Jackson and Scott (1999, p. 88) state that 'risk anxiety is a constant and pervasive feature of everyday consciousness, managed through everyday practices; it might be fuelled by public discussions of risk, but individuals are left to find their own ways of coping with the uncertainty it engenders'.

Childhood is constructed as an age of innocence and vulnerability which adults have an obligation to protect (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 695). Such protection is about their physical safety, but also about their moral development. Parents play a key role in protecting children from immediate threats to their well-being and anything that could disrupt their development into healthy adulthood (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 89). Vigilance is required to anticipate and guard against potential risks to children's safety and well-being (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 90; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 691). The decisions made by adults about the level of surveillance children need and the level of autonomy granted to them are informed by notions about children's capabilities, or lack thereof, their specific vulnerabilities, and their immaturity (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 90; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 691). Brain development research suggests that adolescence is a period of continued brain growth and change (Johnson, Blum & Giedd 2009, p. 216). Johnson, Blum and Giedd (2009, p. 216) state that 'Longitudinal neuroimaging studies demonstrate that the adolescent brain continues to mature well into the 20s'. Despite this, young people are often viewed as beings to be protected and restricted until they are 'old enough' – a judgement which is itself subjective (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 283).

A further complexity of labelling young people as an 'at risk' group in need of protection is gender. Society holds gender-based expectations about voluntary risk taking (Batchelor 2007; Brown & Penney 2014; Laurendeau & Adams 2010; Lupton 1999a). Historically, several discourses have presented women as subjects of risk discourses (Laurendeau & Adams 2010, p. 437). Young women, in contrast with young men, are seen to be more 'at risk' or vulnerable to risk (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 281; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p.

699). This is prominent in the contemporary sporting world, where there exists a deep ambivalence surrounding women who engage in activities that put them ‘at risk’ (Laurendeau & Adams 2010, p. 439). Risk discourses, particularly those concerned with femininity and motherhood, are central to the way that society responds to women who choose to participate in activities deemed to put them ‘at risk’ (Laurendeau & Adams 2010, p. 440). Batchelor (2007, p. 224) states that young women are ‘more tightly regulated than any other social group’. Brown and Penney (2014, p. 281) suggest that there is a strong moral discourse that reflects value orientations to young people, particularly young females, and the role of parents in determining what their children should and should not be allowed to do.

Understanding risk in the negative reflects the view that risks are bad and should be avoided or minimised (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 279). Parents who view risk in such ways would be seen to be responsible or demonstrating good parenting by avoiding exposing their children to risk (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 279). In contrast, if parents choose not to take danger seriously, they may risk being perceived by others as uncaring or irresponsible (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 693). Much research has been done on parents’ efforts to restrict their children’s media use in order to minimise risk exposure (Livingstone, Olafsson, Helsper, Lupianez-Villanueva, Veltri & Folkvord 2017, p. 97). Livingstone et al. (2017, p. 98) found that younger children receive more parental mediation, and that girls receive more restrictive mediation than boys. Jackson and Scott (1999, p. 93) warn that parental fear can limit children’s lives and experiences in a range of ways, and can decrease experiences which develop independence and self-reliance. Risk anxiety can result in children’s autonomy being restricted and their opportunities to develop coping skills reduced (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 103). Paternalism and protection hinder young people’s ability to be informed, thoughtful and engaged (boyd 2014, p. 28). Jackson and Scott (1999, p. 101) stress that ‘parental risk anxiety and children’s consciousness of risk need to be set in the context of what children actually do’.

The discourse of risk

The literature on young people ‘at risk’, protection of ‘at risk’ young people, risk taking by young people, and risk responsibility indicates a discourse of risk that sees risk as something bad and to be avoided. Lupton (1999a, p. 15) defines discourse as ‘a bounded body of

knowledge and associated practices, a particular identifiable way of giving meaning to reality via words or imagery'. McRobbie and Thornton (1995, p. 570) describe how social reality is 'experienced through language, communication and imagery' and '[s]ocial meanings and social differences are inextricably tied up with representation'. Through discourse, we understand the world. Discourse leads us to perceive things in certain ways, thus affecting how we deal with the risks around us.

Risk and risk taking have become defining features of sociological debate (France 2000, p. 317). Over time, understandings of risk have changed. Conceptualisations of risk in the past, aligned risk with ideas of fate or fortune, signifying a link to religious cosmologies. Such understandings of fate created a feeling of things taking their own uncontrollable course (Giddens 1990, p. 133). Originally, risk was considered in terms of natural events, such as a storm or flood, against which humans could do little except estimate the likelihood and act to minimise the impact (Lupton 1999a, p. 5). Although such natural events still occur, nature is no longer the primary source of danger (Giddens 1990, p. 110). Understandings of risk, then, changed to incorporate both naturally occurring events and risk that was a result of human beings, of human decisions and human action (Lupton 1999a, p. 6). As Beck (1999, p. 4) states: 'Risks presuppose decision', meaning that risks always depend on decisions. Decisions are made based on risks, and decisions create new risks. Such a decision was previously made based on safety calculations, focusing on cause and effect. In the 'risk society' or 'world risk society' the established risk-logic has diminished and been made invalid (Beck 1999, p. 36). Current conceptualisations of risk incorporate the understanding that human moral imperatives, natural causes, and chance can all affect and be affected by risk (Giddens 1990, p. 34).

Although risks are overwhelmingly discussed in negative terms in the risk society thesis by Beck (1992, 1999), as something to be avoided or minimised, the positive effects are acknowledged. This positive experience is related to the idea of risk being a global trend. Risk crosses borders, allowing communities to be constructed and reconstructed as communities of risk (Beck 1999, p. 16). In early modernity, risk could be both good and bad (Lupton 1999a, p. 15). Douglas (1992, p. 23) describes how risk was associated with marine insurance in the past and viewed as neutral. This viewpoint measured the probability of a ship returning safely against the chance of it being lost at sea (Douglas 1992, p. 23). However, at

the end of the 20th century, the classifications of a ‘good risk’ and a ‘bad risk’, the weighing up of positive and negative outcomes, were lost (Furedi 2002, p. 18; Lupton 1999a, p. 15).

‘Risk’ now refers only to negative and undesirable outcomes, and is correlated with danger, misfortune, threat, hazard, harm, or something otherwise intrinsically bad (Douglas 1992, p. 24; Fox 1999, p. 12; Furedi 2002, p. 17; Lupton 1999a, p. 15; Zinn 2005, p. 1). As Douglas (1992, p. 24) notes, ‘the word has been pre-empted to mean bad risks’. Douglas (1992, p. 26) goes on to argue that risk is applied to looking forward, and is used to assess the dangers ahead. Douglas (1992, p. 14) points out that although risk is not a new word, it has acquired new uses. The language of danger has turned into the language of risk (Douglas 1992, p. 14). The word ‘risk’ now means ‘danger’, and ‘high risk’ means ‘lots of danger’ in popular discourse (Douglas 1992, p. 24). Brown and Penney (2014, p. 270) highlight how the positioning of risk as a negative has implications for the desirability or morality of voluntary risk taking. As Furedi (2002, p. 18) recognises, ‘as risks become more and more equated with danger, there is a tendency to adopt strategies that are selfconsciously about risk avoidance’. Discourses on risk and safety have given rise to the academic discipline of risk management (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 270).

Danger and risk are related, but they cannot be considered the same thing. Risk presumes danger, which can be understood as a ‘threat to desired outcomes’ (Giddens 1990, p. 35). Recognition of the existence of risk means accepting the possibility that things could go wrong, and that this possibility cannot be eliminated (Giddens 1990, p. 111). Our awareness of risk affects our perspective on social life, how we perceive and experience our bodies, how we view ourselves in relation to others, and how we live out our everyday lives (Lupton 1999a, p. 14). People may take ‘calculated risks’, demonstrating an awareness of potential danger or threat, and making choices in light of this. People may also take ‘acceptable risks’, in which they minimise danger and in which trust is played out (Giddens 1990, p. 35). This positioning of risk as negative (unacceptable and to be avoided) or positive (acceptable and desirable) reflects the shifting value statements of society (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 270). Safety has become a fundamental value governed by the ‘precautionary principle’, according to which a risk should not be taken unless its outcome can be anticipated in advance (Furedi 2002, p. 8). However, the future is unknowable, and every choice we make is beset with uncertainty (Douglas 1985, p. 42; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 690).

The discourse of risk, which positions risk as a negative concept correlated with danger, is situated in the context of neoliberalism. Brown, Shoveller, Chabot and LaMontagne (2013, p. 333) argue that concepts of risk are both generated by and used to reinforce a neoliberal agenda. Neoliberal approaches shift risk onto individuals and define risks as individual problems to solve (Brown, Shoveller, Chabot & LaMontagne 2013, p. 335). Individuals bear the responsibility and blame in regard to risks (Brown, Shoveller, Chabot & LaMontagne 2013, p. 335). Sharland (2006, p. 255) describes how 'neo-liberal governmentality, in particular, privileges the norm of self-regulation above all'. Risk can be used as a tool to advance ideals such as rational choice and individual responsibility (Brown, Shoveller, Chabot & LaMontagne 2013, p. 333).

Positive risk taking

The negative discourse of risk overshadows understandings that risk can have positive attributes. Neihart (1999, p. 291) argues for the acknowledgement of the capability of risk to be a positive thing, contributing to 'increased self-confidence, skill mastery, changes in attitudes and beliefs, and goal achievement'. Similarly, Lyng (1990, p. 860) argues that self-actualisation and self-determination can be achieved by pushing the boundaries of culturally accepted norms and embracing opportunity. Donnelly (2004, p. 54) suggests that modernity's ambivalence about risk is reflected through voluntary risk taking in leisure and in the simultaneous celebration of and anxiety about sport as risk.

Palmer (2002) highlights the role of positive risk taking in sport. Palmer (2002, p. 323) comments on how risk and danger are sought by people who wish to engage in high-risk sports such as rock climbing, mountaineering, bungee jumping and snowboarding. Such sports or leisure activities are often pursued by the young or 'young at heart' (Palmer 2002, p. 323). Marketing and commercialisation of such adventure sports have, as Palmer (2002, p. 324) comments, 'fundamentally altered people's perceptions of risk, trust and danger'. Through wide circulation in the media, branding of products associated with extreme sports, and the appeal of belonging to a culture of extremity, previous 'on the edge behaviour' has become mainstream risk taking (Palmer 2002, p. 325). Palmer (2002, p. 335) describes how the selling of extremity 'has brought fundamental changes to the social and symbolic dimensions of the activities themselves'. Brown and Penney (2014, p. 269) describe how,

through voluntary risk taking, the prospect of risk is now accompanied by the potential for reward. Some risks may appear to be worth pursuing as they lead to positive outcomes (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 271). Like Palmer (2002), Brown and Penney (2014, p. 271) point to the voluntary risk taking seen in recreational activities such as adventure pursuits and extreme sports.

'Edgework' is a term coined by Lyng (1990) that refers to the actions of those who voluntarily engage by desired choice in risk taking through dangerous leisure activities. There are many people who actively seek experiences considered risky and involving a high potential for injury or death (Lyng 1990, p. 851). Lyng (1990, p. 857) describes such activities as including high-risk sports such as skydiving, scuba diving, rock climbing, motor racing, downhill skiing and hang gliding. Occupations can also involve voluntary risk taking: consider firefighting, test piloting and combat soldiering, for example (Lyng 1990, p. 857). What is common among such activities and occupations is that they all involve a 'clearly observable threat to one's physical or mental well-being or one's sense of an ordered existence' (Lyng 1990, p. 857). Lyng (1990, p. 857) highlights how the 'edge' can be defined in various ways: life versus death, consciousness versus unconsciousness; sanity versus insanity; and an ordered sense of self and environment versus a disordered one. Often it is the experience of such activities on which the value is placed (Lyng 1990, p. 852). Such activities are often viewed as pleasurable and as a means to achieve personal development (France 2000, p. 328). Through 'edgework', performance limits are explored and 'mental toughness' is tested (Lyng 1990, p. 859). Engaging in such experiences can produce a sense of self-realisation, self-actualisation, and self-determination, as well as powerful feelings of personal competence and authenticity (Lyng 1990, p. 860). This positive viewpoint is often associated with adult decisions and actions, where adults can decide to take risks or to balance risk against pleasure – but the same positive spin is not given to risk taking by young people (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 691). Sharland (2006, p. 252) argues that, to the contrary, risk taking should be recognised as a routine, even desirable, component of young people's lives and development.

The concept of edgework has recently been applied to the field of young people and the Internet. Hart (2017, p. 301) asserts that young people engage in intimate edgework through postings of risky selfies on the social media site Tumblr. Edgework is the 'purposeful engagement in risky behaviour as a result of the seductive character of the experience', which

brings rewards (Hart 2017, p. 301). As discussed previously, edgework was originally applied to those engaging in extreme sports such as skydiving. Hart (2017, p. 301) argues that young people posting risky photos online gain a range of benefits like those original forms of edgework but without the threat of physical danger. Hart (2017, p. 301) describes the 'challenge' of edgework as involving using skills and knowledge to get as close to the edge as possible without suffering injury, or losing sanity or general well-being. Hart (2017, p. 303) found that through taking and sharing risky selfies on Tumblr, young people can positively affect their relationship with their own body and increase sexual self-satisfaction. Creating and sharing risky selfies can also 'help young people feel empowered, free, and excited or aroused' (Hart 2017, p. 311).

Risk can be good, creative, and exciting, and can result in positive development. Such developments can be seen not only at an individual level, but, much more broadly, in society itself. To challenge oneself is essential to human development, and to challenge oneself is about taking risks. Where risks exist, there is the possibility of new things happening and new opportunities being created. Informed risk taking can be a means to achieving personal growth (Lupton 1999a, p. 154). As Neihart (1999, p. 292) states: 'To take a risk means to make an active choice toward your own growth'.

The dignity of risk

The dignity of risk and the right to fail are concepts first used to describe people with a physical disability and have since been adapted for people living with a mental illness (Parsons 2008, p. 28). The dignity of risk acknowledges the view that in every situation there is an element of risk and that every opportunity for growth has the potential for failure (Parsons 2008, p. 28). Learning occurs when people go through a process of trial and error (Parsons 2008, p. 28). In the area of mental health, people are denied the dignity of risk when they are denied the opportunity to learn and recover (Parsons 2008, p. 28).

Considerations of the dignity of risk place the emphasis on individual choice and determination (Parsons 2008, p. 28). Making choices involves both the possibility for success and for failure, and every choice involves hope (Parsons 2008, p. 28). There is a need for a positive outlook that all people have the potential to succeed, that they can do so, but that if

they do not then this is alright. Limiting people's choices through overprotection, by not allowing them to take risks, diminishes hope (Parsons 2008, p. 28). This may be done due to fear; of the unknown, and of failure (Parsons 2008, p. 28).

The dignity of risk is related to human rights (Parsons 2008, p. 28). Parsons (2008, p. 28) emphasises the importance of seeing the positives in risk and the benefits that can come out of failure. People should be provided the opportunity to make decisions, take risks, deal with the responsibility and learn from these actions. Through failure, people may then redefine their goals and develop resilience (Parsons 2008, p. 28). Saleebey (2009, p. 13) describes resilience as a 'process – for continued growth and articulation of capacities, knowledge, insight, and virtues'.

Stanford (2010, p. 1067) states that consideration of risk in positive terms, as a 'generative of change and opportunities is mostly absent from the social work risk literature'. It is important to support the dignity of risk, to encourage people to make choices and take risks, because this can result in increased self-esteem, self-respect, empowerment and choice (Parsons 2008, p. 28). People need risk in their lives to self-actualise.

The concept of the dignity of risk highlights that certain groups of people, such as those with disabilities or mental illness, are prevented from taking risks. These groups are seen to need protection. This concept of providing people with the dignity of risk can be applied to young people. As highlighted previously, they are a group considered to be 'at risk' and in need of protection from risks. However, being able to take considered risks and manage the consequences is essential for young people (Cranmer 2013, p. 75).

Theorising risk

The literature presented thus far has discussed risk in relation to young people. It is important, now, to consider how risk as a concept is conceptualised. How risk is conceptualised has an impact on understandings of risk in relation to young people and social media. Two major theories resonate with the conceptual framework of this research: the risk society thesis and the cultural theory of risk. The risk society thesis is important in conceptualising how society is considered to be filled with risk. This then has an influence on how people perceive others and make decisions about risk. It is also crucial to consider the

social and cultural dimensions of risk. The cultural theory of risk describes how people perceive risk through their social interactions and highlights a communal notion of risk.

The risk society thesis

The concern of young people ‘at risk’ resonates with aspects of the risk society thesis. Discussion of the ‘risk society’ originated with sociologists Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. Beck and Giddens are heralded as academics for their significant contribution to the risk literature through the risk society thesis. Beck is considered the key author, but Giddens is also commonly cited as an important contributor to the risk society literature.

Risk theory provides an understanding of how people operate in a world filled with risk. Giddens (1991, p. 3) defines modernity as a risk culture, and describes our current world as being a ‘fraught and dangerous one’ (Giddens 1990, p. 10). Beck (1992, p. 79) states that the risk society is a ‘catastrophic society’. In modern society, we are faced with the ‘inevitability of living with dangers’ (Giddens 1990, p. 131). Risk society theory argues that risks have become globalised and have increased in magnitude, resulting in risk being harder to calculate, manage or avoid (Lupton 1999b, p. 4). Risk society theorists argue that risk is everywhere and that we are all vulnerable to it. Risk then becomes fundamental to how we organise the social world (Giddens 1991, p. 3). It is not possible to avoid risk, it is simply a part of everyday living; as Tulloch and Lupton (2003, p. 1) state: ‘the concept of risk pervades everyday life’. It is universally acknowledged that the risk society has come to pass (Shen, Shen & Xing 2015, p. 1), and accepting that we exist in the risk society requires an acceptance that risk is constantly present for all people, including young people.

Giddens (1990, p. 7) declares modernity a ‘double-edged phenomenon’, and argues that development in modernity has provided great opportunities for people to discover and understand the world, but at the same time has created and exposed a ‘sombre side’. Giddens also (1991, p. 4) highlights how modernity has reduced the overall riskiness of certain parts of life, yet has simultaneously introduced new risks. Trust and risk, opportunity and danger, are bound up in modern day-to-day life. The mix of risk and opportunity in modern society is complex, complicating people’s personal considerations and decisions (Giddens 1990, p. 147). Living in the risk society means living with a calculative outlook on the possibilities of

action, both positive and negative, that we are confronted with (Giddens 1991, p. 28). Modernity can be characterised by risk taking and risk minimisation (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 689). Risk taking and risk minimisation are concepts that are relevant to the context of young people on social media under examination in this research.

There exists a well-distributed awareness of, as Giddens (1990, p. 125) writes, 'risk as risk'. Risks are considered to be risks by most lay people in society, signifying a recognition and acceptance of their existence. This consciousness of risk is also acknowledged by Beck (1992, p. 34), who writes of the presupposition that risks have been socially recognised or legitimised. Beck (1992, p. 34) terms this the 'latent side effect', a kind of licence or process which distributes and justifies undesirable consequences or risks. Beck (1999, p. 58) writes: 'Acceptable risks are ultimately accepted risks'. Furthermore, the widespread knowledge of risk environments throughout society leads to a common awareness of the limits of expertise (Giddens 1990, p. 130).

Risk thinking, provided by the risk society thesis, has come to dominate our lives, and therefore has become a part of everyday life. All people are subject to risk thinking. Such risk thinking is applied to all parts of life, including social, cultural, political and economic spaces. The risk society thesis helps to understand how the world has been constructed in risky terms. The risk society thesis influences how we see people and our relations with others. Human relationships are increasingly interpreted as the site of new, unrecognised risks (Furedi 2002, p. 38). Every person with whom we interact, stranger or acquaintance, must be treated with caution (Furedi 2002). Within the risk society thesis, Giddens (1990, p. 119) also writes about the nature of friendship which has been transformed in modernity. He explains how understandings of friendship have changed, resulting in 'stranger' or 'enemy' no longer being considered opposites to 'friend', but the opposite instead being 'acquaintance' or someone unknown. Honour is replaced by loyalty, sincerity by authenticity, and a friend is no longer someone who speaks the truth but instead someone who protects the other's emotional well-being (Giddens 1990, p. 119).

Sharland (2006, p. 253) asserts that individuals are 'forced to interpret diverse, unpredictable experiences in order to establish their own coherent biographies'. Risk assessment is a cognitive process involving individuals making rational choices about their behaviour (France 2000, p. 319). Many decisions people make involve uncertainty, and through risk taking, judgement and skill can produce high quality decisions (Dror, Katona & Mungur

1998, p. 67). Beck, Giddens and Lash (1994, p. 9) highlight how risk informs us about what should not be done, but not what should be done, and thus avoidance imperatives dominate. Through the risk society thesis, we understand that people try to avoid risks, but that through the act of making decisions based on risks, we can, in fact, create more risks. Given that people can create risks, trust becomes very important, as are the potential consequences of trust being undermined. Brown and Penney (2014, p. 280) point to the contested and situated nature of who is defining what is or is not risky and the way in which risk is portrayed.

Risk in the sense of threats or dangers causes people to create adaptive responses and novel initiatives (Giddens 1991, p. 13). Giddens (1991, p. 13) acknowledges a range of reactions, including anxiety, pain, worry, numbness, courage, adaptation and resolution. Giddens (1990) highlights four different adaptive reactions to risk. First is the outlook of Lasch (cited by Giddens 1990, p. 135) termed pragmatic acceptance. It is a reaction focused on surviving despite the knowledge of risk. This is done by concentrating on day-to-day tasks, creating a sense of numbness to risk and putting it out of the conscious mind. Second is sustained optimism, which involves positive faith that overrides the existence of potential risks. This risk reaction offers great ‘resonance and emotional appeal’ (Giddens 1990, p. 136). Third is the attitude of cynical pessimism, a connection with anxieties about risk. This reaction uses humour or parody to lessen the emotional impact of anxieties through a desperate hopefulness. Fourthly and finally is the reaction to risk of radical engagement. This optimistic reaction is the major impetus for social movement, as those with such an outlook believe that we should act to reduce or remove the risks with which we are faced (Giddens 1990, p. 137).

Risk theory provides a backdrop for understandings of risk and how living in a risk society has an influence on how we perceive and understand risk, as well as how we behave, given such knowledge. I assert that people operate in a world that is full of risk. It is commonly accepted that risk is constantly present for all people. While the risk society thesis has been highly influential on risk theory, it falls short in the context of this research. The risk society thesis describes risk as an object; risk as a fixed idea. The risk society thesis also contains an individualistic notion of risk, which excludes consideration of risk as a social construct. These understandings limit how people understand risk. To move away from such fixed ideas about risk, I now draw on the cultural theory of risk.

The cultural theory of risk

The cultural theory of risk is the work of Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky. Douglas (1985, 1992) and Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) describe the cultural dimensions of risk, and argue that the perception of risk is a social process. As Douglas (1992, p. xi) states: 'cultural theory is a way of thinking about culture that draws the social environment systematically into the picture of individual choices'. Cultural theory is important in considering how risks are both constructed and selected (Tansey & O'Riordan 1999, p. 71). Cultural theory suggests that individual views are shaped by the social groups they are a part of, and thus attitudes and judgements about risks are set within cultural relationships (Tansey & O'Riordan 1999, p. 71). A sociocultural approach to risk acknowledges that understandings of risk, and therefore how risk is dealt with and experienced in everyday life, are developed through membership of cultures (Tulloch & Lupton 2003, p. 1).

Douglas (1985, p. 68) argues that culture is the coding principle through which risks are recognised. The word 'culture' corresponds to an individual's sense of environment (Douglas 1985, p. 68). The Oxford Dictionary (2019) defines culture as the 'ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society', and the 'attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group'. Douglas (1985, p. 67) defines culture as 'the publicly shared collection of principles and values used at any one time to justify behavior'. When a person considers the risks they take, an individual must start from some culturally established norm of due carefulness (Douglas 1985, p. 68). The cultural standards of what constitute appropriate and improper risks are fundamental to social life (Douglas 1985, p. 68). It is not possible to consider risk without considering the cultural influence on people's acceptable standards of living and morality, which affects their risk perception and assessment (Douglas 1985, p. 82).

Different people are concerned with different risks, and there is much disagreement about what is risky, how risky it is, and what people should do about it (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 1). Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 1, p. 19) pose the following questions: 'How do people decide which risks to take and which to ignore?'; 'What is the basis for guarding against some dangers and ignoring others?'; and 'Why do some people face some unknown risks gladly and bristle at others?' In answer to these questions, Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 6) argue that the social principles that guide behaviour affect the judgement on which dangers should be most feared, which risks are worth taking, and who should take

them. This social process affects people's perception of risk (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 6). Anything and everything may prove risky. The decision about which risks are worth worrying about depends on the social forms selected: common values lead to common fears (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 8). Therefore, risks are socially selected (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 14). Tansey and O'Riordan (1999) highlight how cultural theory is important to understanding the social construction of risk and how groups select and frame risks.

No-one can precisely calculate the total risk they may face, but they must act as if they have (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982, p. 1). Also, there is no guarantee that the risks that people seek to avoid are those that will harm them the most (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 3). Risk should be considered both a product of knowledge about the future and of consent to the most desired prospects (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 5). However, knowledge of danger is partial and limited; judgements of risk and safety are selected based on what is known and what is valued (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 80). Risk research has shown that the public does not view risk in the same way as experts (Douglas 1992, p. 11). Research on public perception of risks has shown that people worry more about media reported events that seem dramatic, such as air crashes with film stars on board, and less about undramatic losses, such as deaths from asthma (Douglas 1985, p. 65).

Risk assessment requires a ranking of dangers in order to know which to address and in what order (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 3). When people assess risks, they do not conceal their moral commitments, but rather put them into the argument, explicitly and prominently (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 73). Choice is about the future, and the choice between important issues has moral implications (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 83). Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 9) argue that people selectively attend to certain risks that reflect and conform to their accepted way of life. The acceptability of risk taking can be considered in terms of socially and morally responsible or irresponsible behaviour (Brown & Penney 2014, p. 281). Risk and risk taking should be recognised as a negotiated process which is a product of social interactions (France 2000, p. 325). As Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 84) state: 'Choice requires selection, and selection demands judgment not only about what is but what ought to be in the future'. However, acceptable risk is a matter of judgement, and today judgements differ (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 194).

Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 16) state that individuals make a distinction between risks that ‘they undertake knowingly’ and risks that ‘are imposed on them’. However, this distinction between voluntary and involuntary risk is not objectively identifiable (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 17). Knowledge is always lacking, ambiguity always lurking (Douglas 1992, p. 9). Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 9) also discuss risk in relation to technology. They point out that science and technology were once a source of safety but have become a source of risk (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 10). The key terms in the debate over technology are risk and acceptability (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 9).

Douglas (1985, p. 1) asserts that a very significant body of work views risk perception as an individual rather than social phenomenon. According to Dean (1999, p. 133) the individualisation of risk is linked to a form of governing that seeks to govern ‘through the responsible and prudential choices and actions of individuals on behalf of themselves and those for whom they feel an emotional bond or affinity’. Supporters of the risk society thesis argue that in late modernity there is a trend towards individulisation (Lupton 1999b, p. 4). Individuals are positioned as ‘choosing agents’and are able to exercise a high level of control over the extent to which they expose themselves to danger therefore responsible for becoming prey to risk (Lupton 1999b, p. 4). Douglas is critical of this individualistic approach to risk that has dominated risk perception, and focused on processes of cognition and choice (Lupton 1999a, p. 37). Douglas (1985, p. 3) argues that it is hard to maintain that perception of risk is private or that culture is so static that it can be bracketed away. France (2000, p. 318) also highlights how risk and risk taking are often constructed in terms of ‘fact’ and ‘truth’, but it is clear that risk and risk taking are products of social construction. Technico-scientific approaches to risk treat risk largely as a ‘taken-for-granted objective phenomenon’ (Lupton 1999b, p. 2). Dean (1999, p. 133) states that Beck’s approach to risk, through the risk society thesis, can be characterised as ‘totalising, relist and relying on a uniform conception of risk’.

Lash (cited in Tulloch & Lupton 2003, p. 6) is also critical of the individualisation of risk, and argues for the notion of ‘risk cultures’ which offer fluid and interchanging ways of viewing risk. Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 80) highlight that people are not isolated individuals. In risk perception, people act less as individuals and more as social beings. Individuals’ perceptions of risk cannot be studied as though they occur in isolation from the social world (Boholm 1996, p. 65). Lupton (1999b, p. 2) argues that risk cannot be accepted

as an ‘unproblematic fact, a phenomenon that can be isolated from its social, cultural and historical contexts’. Risk perception is socially and culturally framed (Rippl 2002, p. 148). Douglas (cited in Lupton 1999b, p. 3) argues that notions of risk are shared conventions and expectations rather than individualistic judgements. People follow social rules, and their sociality should be included in any analysis of how their minds work (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 80).

Cultural and social factors, then, are of central importance to understanding risk and risk taking (France 2000, p. 323). Risk must be understood within its social and cultural context (France 2000, p. 324), as judgements are not formed independently of social context (Tansey & O’Riordan 1999, p. 71). From the cultural theory of risk perspective, culture not only helps people understand risks, but also contributes to a communal rather than individualistic notion of risk (Lupton 1999a, p. 38). Public perception of risks and levels of acceptability are collective constructs (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982, p. 186). Lupton (1999a, p. 39) describes how, from a cultural perspective, dangers are selected for attention by a society and are labelled risks for reasons that make sense to a culture based on its shared values and concerns. Values and worldviews shape individuals’ perceptions and evaluation of risks (Rippl 2002, p. 148). Perception of risks is highly influenced by ‘socially embedded values’ (Boholm 1996, p. 65). Understanding risk in relation to young people involves considering the construction and influence of lay beliefs, the impact of social interactions, and the habituation to risk and risk taking (France 2000, p. 324).

Lupton (1999a, p. 25) explains how scholars adopting the cultural theory of risk, such as Douglas, theorise risk as being used to ‘establish and maintain conceptual boundaries between self and Other’. Risk is viewed as a strategy for dealing with danger and Otherness (Lupton 1999a, p. 36). Douglas and her colleagues (1982; 1985; 1992) discuss risk using descriptions of purity and danger, risk and blame, the self and the Other. Purity and danger are central to the cultural theory of risk, and to descriptions of the human body involving boundaries between inside and outside (Lupton 1999a, p. 40). This concept is then related to society, where society itself is seen to have form and external boundaries. As Lupton (1999a, p. 40) explains, these boundaries can ‘represent any boundaries which are threatened’. Notions of purity and maintaining boundaries highlight how societies deal with threats to order and stability (Lupton 1999a, p. 40). The conceptualisation of bodily control is an expression of social control (Lupton 1999a, p. 40) – it mirrors how the boundaries of a

society are maintained; by allowing some people in, and keeping others out (Lupton 1999a, p. 40). Risk is also used as a concept for blaming and marginalising an Other who is positioned as a threat, and therefore as a risk to the integrity of self (Lupton 1999a, p. 40).

An important feature of the cultural theory of risk provided by Douglas and Wildavsky is the grid group model, which Lupton (1999a, p. 50) describes as a 'model of behaviour in understanding different logics of risk as they are expressed in social groups or organizations'. This model includes: hierarchists, who respect authority and conform to group norms; egalitarians, who strongly identify with their group and blame outsiders for risk; individualists, who support self-regulation of risk and see risk as bringing benefits as well as dangers; and fatalists, who lack strong cohesion with a group but who are highly constrained in their behaviours and view themselves as having little control over risk (Lupton 1999a, p. 51). The grid group model is static and 'not designed to illustrate the processes of change' (Tansey & O'Riordan 1999, p. 82). This model has been criticised for its rigidness and inability to account for the ways in which people move between the four worldviews rather than adhering permanently to one (Lupton 1999a, p. 51).

Conclusion

As Sharland (2006, p. 253) writes: 'What it means to be young in contemporary times is hotly contested, with questions of agency and structure, individualization, risk and regulation brought to the fore', and as Kelly (2000, p. 463) notes: 'In an age of large-scale and profound social changes, narratives of uncertainty and risk dominate popular, political and theoretical discourses about youth'.

I have reviewed theory, knowledge and research to demonstrate how young people as a group are conceptualised and often viewed as an 'at risk' group. But risk taking is a part of being young, and risk responsibility lies with individuals. However, the responsibility for risk decisions is not often given to young people. Instead, they are seen to be '*at risk*' and in need of protection by adults. These discussions of young people and risk all position risk as a negative concept and, as I have discussed, this has formed the dominant discourse of risk. Understandings of risk that are correlated with danger preclude the acknowledgement that risk also has positive attributes, and I have highlighted the need to allow young people the

dignity to take risks. A discussion of young people and risk would be incomplete without considering how risk as a concept is theorised. Therefore, I presented in this chapter two major theories of risk that have influenced this research. The risk society thesis has been highly influential on academic and societal understandings of risk. In the context of this research, however, it is not enough on its own. The cultural theory of risk is crucial to this research, because it allows us to recognise the cultural aspects of risk and how risk is perceived and experienced through social interactions.

Chapter Three: Literature Review – Young People and Risk Online

In the previous chapter, I presented risk in relation to young people and risk theory. This chapter locates young people and risk in the context of social media. In this chapter, I discuss literature that has contributed to the narrative that pervades conversations about young people and risk on social media. I begin the chapter by discussing how the Internet is seen a risky space. In this space, young people are viewed as 'at risk' and engaging in risky activities. Risky activities that young people engage in online are organised into three categories: content, contact and conduct. In addition, research has shown that adults have worries about young people's morality being 'at risk' online. The adult-centric risk narrative of young people and risk online is reflective of risk anxieties and has resulted in a social media panic. What is missing from these discourses is young people's voices. While some research has given prominence to young people's voices on this issue, there is a clear need for young people's voices to be given prominence more often and to be valued more highly.

The Internet as a risky space

In the risk society world, the everyday world is seen to be risky, and certain places are categorised as risky places. The Internet, which is constantly evolving its content, has also been viewed through a risk lens. The online world is commonly regarded as risk filled, a space in which attention and caution are important. A popular explanation for risk acquiring new prominence is that risks from technology have greatly increased (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982; Douglas 1992; Langan 2009). Giddens (1991, p. 28) highlights the double-edged nature of science and technology: offering possibilities, but also creating new risks and dangers. Culturally, perspectives of the Internet shift between it being a utopic space where anything is possible and a more dystopic space, which is clearly linked to a risk narrative.

Perceptions of danger are increasingly focused on the human-created, manufactured risks of technology (Furedi 2002, p. 28). As Furedi (2002, p. 6) writes, 'new technological hazards

have given risk a boundless character'. Most new technologies are liable to be portrayed as inherently risky, as science and technology are commonly identified with dangerous outcomes (Furedi 2002, p. 55). The mistrust of science is one of the most visible elements in the growth of risk consciousness (Furedi 2002, p. 130). The Internet has been characterised as a risky domain, especially in relation to young users. Communication on the Internet poses genuine new challenges for the moral philosophy of trust, and mistrust may be an important complication to Internet use (Myskja 2008, p. 213). The issue of trust on the Internet is merely an extension of the issue of trust in general, as trust is a fundamental part of human interaction (Myskja 2008, p. 215).

It was not so long ago that the Internet was regarded in a positive manner, a powerful instrument creating opportunities and improving the quality of our lives (Furedi 2002, p. 32). However, a focus on side-effects and adverse outcomes has come to dominate discussions and discourses on Internet use (Furedi 2002, p. 33). Light, McGrath and Griffiths (2008, p. 1) point out that social networking spaces can be seen to involve 'deception, social grooming and the posting of defamatory content'. In a similar negative tone, Furedi (2002, p. 33) describes how in many accounts, 'cyberspace has become a risky territory populated by paedophiles, cyberstalkers and other perpetrators of online sex crimes'. Likewise, Gordon (2006, para. 13) points out that when parents talk about online risks, they are often referring to online sexual predators; our culture's modern-day bogeymen. In addition, Livingstone and Smith (2014, p. 636) state that 'public concern about compulsive or excessive internet use or internet addiction is growing'.

Young people's social worlds are divided into safe and dangerous places (Jackson & Scott 1999, p. 101). This has consequences for where children can go, how they use their spaces, and how and where they feel safe (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 700). Concerns about children's exposure to the risk of harm online have become familiar (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 364). Historically, any new technology that has been introduced to society brings with it risks, and young people continue to be seen as those most 'at risk'.

Young people ‘at risk’ online

Young people are commonly regarded as ‘at risk’ online. As McVeigh (2016, para. 2) warns: ‘The ubiquity of the internet and social media, with its dark underbelly of hardcore pornography, body shaming and cyberbullying, is encroaching on their wellbeing’. Research has highlighted potential dangers young people face online, such as unwanted exposure to sexually explicit material and online sexual solicitation (Madigan et al. 2018, p. 133).

Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2001, p. 3011) describe how young people are viewed as ‘naive and inexperienced children falling prey to exploitation’ online. Likewise, Berson (2000, p. 158) describes young people as a ‘naïve and willing audience’ who are ‘vulnerable to crime and exploitation’. Bruce Schneier, a security expert, posed the question ‘How can we expect the younger generation to do this when they don’t even know the problem?’ in reference to the protection of personal privacy online (cited in Greene 2010, para. 3). This question assumes that young people are unaware and seemingly incapable of managing their privacy online. Robards (2012, p. 386) discussed how Eric Schmidt, a past CEO of Google, suggested that young people will want to change their names upon reaching adulthood to disown youthful hijinks stored on their friends’ social media sites. Robards (2012, p. 386) highlights how such comments imply that young people are incapable of managing their ‘digital trace’, and are representative of a growing concern about this ‘digital trace’, often directed at young people’s use of social media sites like Facebook. The digital trace is created as young people use social media as ‘spaces of reflexivity where narratives of transition are performed, commented upon, recorded and archived’ (Robards 2012, p. 394).

Although there is a wealth of commentary on the risks involved in young people’s online usage (Belsey 2008; Campbell 2005; Mitchell, Finkelhor & Wolak 2001; Mitchell, Ybarra & Finkelhor 2007; Shariff 2005; Walker & Bakopoulous 2004; Ybarra & Mitchell 2004; Ybarra & Mitchell 2008), relatively little empirical research has focused on how young people interact with online risk in other ways. A focus on risk ‘distorts the productive ways young people use social media’ (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 150). Price and Dalgleish (2010, p. 59) argue that further research should be done to qualitatively explore the coping strategies used by young people when faced with negative experiences online.

This research, then, argues against the conceptualisation of young people as naïve, vulnerable, and in need of protection by adults online. Instead, young people are informers, and thus this research is representative of young people's own accounts of their experiences.

Young people's risky behaviours online

Social media has had a profound impact on our daily choices and actions. We live in a culture where experiences are shared through social media with immediacy, receiving instant feedback from others. The Internet is regarded as a risky space, particularly for young people. Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 18) point out that 'a large portion of youth seem to expose themselves to these risks and stray – either knowingly or not – from a safer path of behavior'. Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 10) discuss how some young people engage in 'seemingly minor' risks, including accidently infecting the home computer with a virus (23 per cent), or sharing a password with friends (13 per cent), and how others engage in more major risks, such as downloading programs without parental knowledge (25 per cent), chatting with people they do not know in the offline world (22 per cent), viewing or downloading X-rated content (11 per cent), using the Internet to cheat for school (seven per cent), and making posts they later regretted (five per cent). Interestingly, Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 10) also highlighted how girls were more likely to talk to strangers online than boys, and that girls were also more likely to post content they later regretted. Boys, though, were more likely than girls to download programs without parental knowledge, and to download X-rated content (Pieters and Krupin 2010, p. 10). This research also demonstrated that teenagers were significantly more likely to engage in risky behaviours than were younger people (Pieters and Krupin 2010, p. 10).

Online risks include a varied set of intended and unintended experiences which may increase the likelihood of harm to the user (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 367). Children are encountering a fair degree of risk online, inadvertently or otherwise (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 380). Such risks may include: encountering content online that is pornographic, violent, racist, hateful, or depicting self-harm; inappropriate or potentially harmful contact through grooming or harassment; and bullying and privacy invasions (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 367). Staksrud and Livingstone (2009, p. 380) provide a ranking of risk incidence, with exposure to pornography the most common, then viewing violent content,

then bullying, then, lastly, meeting online contacts offline. This can be considered reassuring, as the risks that carry a greater potential for harm occur less frequently. Staksrud and Livingstone (2009, p. 381) point out that boys demonstrate less attention to online risk, which is problematic as they are more likely to encounter it. In addition, boys are more likely to perpetuate risk, for example by bookmarking pornographic or violent links or sending them to friends (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 381).

Academics have distinguished between three types of risk: content, contact, and conduct (Hasebrink, Livingstone, Haddon & Olafsson 2009; Livingstone & Haddon 2009; Livingstone & Smith 2014; Staksrud & Livingstone 2009). Content risks involve young people being recipients of unwelcome or inappropriate mass communication. Contact risks involve young people participating or engaging in risky peer or personal communication. Conduct risks involve young people as actors contributing to risky content or contact. Content, contact and conduct risks (discussed further in the following sections) are all positioned as negative risks. It is risk thinking that frames risk as necessarily bad, which engenders a very conservative, defensive approach to risk. The result of this thinking is to have risk controlling practices; as risks are controlled, so in turn are people. White, Wyn and Robards (2017, p. 347) highlight that what is considered harmful and risky is ‘often shaped by powerful prevailing discourses, fuelled by moral judgements’.

Content risks

Staksrud and Livingstone (2009, p. 373) demonstrate that content risks are more common than contact risks, and that content risks were more prevalent among boys than girls. Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 10) describe content risks as including: advertising, spam and sponsorship; violent, gruesome and hateful content; pornographic and harmful sexual content; and racist and biased information and advice on matters such as drug use.

According to research by Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 16), one third of teenagers are exposed to violent or hateful content online. Another content risk that is highlighted as having negative outcomes for young people is alcohol-related content (Moreno & Whitehill 2014). Moreno and Whitehill (2014, p. 91) argue that young people’s exposure to pro-alcohol messages and images and to unregulated alcohol marketing on social media have been

correlated with alcohol behaviour offline, including risky drinking. Other online content risks have been highlighted in research, including pro-anorexia (Bond 2012) and suicide web-sites (Biddle, Donovan, Hawton, Kapur & Gunnell 2008), which have been found to promote harmful behaviours.

Staksrud and Livingstone (2009, p. 373) found the content risk of exposure to online pornography to be common. According to Livingstone and Smith (2014, p. 639) pornography can refer to 'diverse kinds of sexual content ranging from 'top shelf' or partial nudity to graphic depictions of sexual intercourse to violent or illegal images of abuse'. A study on online pornography by Sabina, Wolak and Finkelhor (2008) showed that boys were more exposed than girls during adolescence. Their results found that 93 per cent of boys and 62 per cent of girls had been exposed to online pornography (Sabina, Wolak & Finkelhor 2008, p. 691). Girls reported more involuntary exposure, and boys were more likely to view pornography often, see more images, and see more extreme images (Sabina, Wolak & Finkelhor 2008, p. 691). Exposure to online pornography was described by Sabina, Wolak & Finkelhor (2008, p. 691) as a 'normative experience'. Responses to being exposed to online pornography varied among participants in this research. Some young people had positive feelings, others felt guilt, embarrassment and disgust (Sabina, Wolak & Finkelhor 2008, p. 693). Boys reported more sexual excitement and girls more embarrassment and disgust, but responses were diverse (Sabina, Wolak & Finkelhor 2008, p. 693). It was also noted that boys reported more exposure to sexual violence (Sabina, Wolak & Finkelhor 2008, p. 693). Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 16) describe how the risk of seeing pornography online is widely regarded with ambivalence by both adults and children, and that there is considerable disagreement over the potential harm involved.

Online content involving images or descriptions of self-harming practices is another concern. Jacob, Evans and Scourfield (2017) argue that viewing online self-harming images leads to self-harming practices by young people. As Jacob, Evans and Scourfield (2017, p. 140) describe: 'Images invoke a physical reaction and inspire behavioural enactment', and 'Viewing online images serves a vital role in many young people's self-harm, as part of ritualistic practice'. Mitchell and Ybarra (2007) conducted research on self-harming young people and found that young people who engage in self-harm may be more likely to engage in online behaviours that potentially placed them in risky situations. Other researchers such as Whitlock, Powers and Eckenrode (2006) and Daine, Hawton, Singaravelu, Stewart, Simkin

and Montgomery (2013) have found that while online interaction can provide social support for adolescents, this may also normalise and encourage self-harming behaviour.

Recently, Instagram announced that it would no longer allow graphic images of self-harm, such as cutting, on its platform (Jacobs 2019, para. 1). This change was reported, by Facebook, which acquired Instagram in 2012, to be in direct response to the suicide of a British teenager in 2017 (Jacobs 2019, para. 3). The teenager's father has spoken publicly about his belief that content on Instagram contributed to his daughters' death (Jacobs 2019, para. 4). Facebook (2019c) also released a statement advising of changes to its platform in regard to self-harming content. Like the new restrictions made by Instagram, Facebook will also no longer allow 'graphic cutting images' (Facebook 2019c, para. 4). Facebook (2019c, para. 1) states that 'while we don't allow people to celebrate or promote self harm or suicide, we do let people share admissions of self harm so their friends and family have an opportunity to reach out, offer support and provide help or resources'. Some academics (Lavis & Winter 2019) warn, however, that a knee-jerk ban could actually harm young people. The concern over self-harming images on social media assumes that 'self-harm content causes, encourages or glorifies acts such as self-cutting and burning' (Lavis & Winter 2019, para. 3). However, Lavis and Winter (2019, para. 3–4) highlight that their research through the University of Birmingham, has shown that young people who search for self-harming discussions are likely already self-harming themselves. It is social media that these young people turn to for support and understanding (Lavis & Winter 2019, para. 5).

Contact risks

Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 10) describe contact risks as including: having personal information tracked or harvested; being bullied, harassed or stalked; meeting strangers and being groomed; and self-harm and unwelcome persuasion. Staksrud and Livingstone (2009, p. 373) note that gender differences are small in relation to contact risks. The three online contact risks I will discuss further are: connecting with strangers; privacy violations; and bullying.

There is public anxiety about young people connecting with strangers online; children make many contacts online with people they have not met face to face (Livingstone & Smith 2014,

p. 640). Unwanted contact from strangers is relatively uncommon (Madden et al. 2013, p. 12), but girls are twice as likely as boys to report contact from strangers that made them feel uncomfortable (Madden et al. 2013, p. 12). Young people 'meeting strangers' is common, but face-to-face meetings with these contacts is rarer, and the majority are with 'friends of friends' (Livingstone & Smith 2014, p. 641). In research by Livingstone and Helsper (2007, p. 633), most young people who met with an online friend in person had a positive experience. Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 16) state that meeting an online contact offline is the least common risk, 'though arguably the most dangerous risk'. It is reported that it is older boys who are more likely to meet online contacts offline, instead of the popular vision of girls being groomed into meeting people (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 373).

Social media is having an important impact on privacy (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010, p. 11). Online social interaction and communication is a 'unique public–private hybrid', in which participants operate from their own home but are also acting before an 'audience' (Kozinets 2010, p. 71). The act of giving out too much personal information is an online risk for young people engaging in social media. Lenhart et al. (2015, p. 55) report that 88 per cent of young people using social media agree that people share too much information about themselves online. Madden et al. (2013 p. 2) state that: 'Teens are sharing more information about themselves on social media sites than they did in the past', which is likely a result of the evolution of social media sites and of changing norms around sharing. Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 16) state that giving out personal information is the most common risky behaviour among young people, with half of online teenagers doing so. Some worry that too much personal information gets into the wrong hands, and some do nothing to protect their privacy (Myers 2009, para. 1). Greene (2010, para. 3) writes that 'as young people grow up with broad swaths of information about them in the public domain, they will lose any sense of privacy that older generations have'. However, as Christofides, Muise and Desmarais (2010, p. 50) acknowledge, 'in this era of online access, it would be totally unrealistic to advise all social networking users to avoid online disclosure'. However, there is concern that, as with other online spaces, social media sites such as Facebook generate digital records and that digital data never dies (Greene 2010, para. 6).

With the emergence of new and evolved social media sites, the ways in which we use and understand the Internet have changed. Robards (2010, p. 4) discusses how privacy standards have shifted, as it was once common practice to withhold your full name online, whereas now

it is standard to share it, with Facebook requiring users to use their full names on their profiles. Likewise, Madden et al. (2013, p. 2) point out that social media sites are designed to encourage the sharing of information and the expansion of networks. One in four young people have been shown to use false information like a fake name, age or location to protect their privacy (Madden et al. 2013, p. 9). However, on social media users are encouraged to use their personal details to facilitate more connections with pre-existing networks. Madden et al. (2013, p. 2) report that few young teens hold a public approach to social media, instead they 'restrict and prune their profiles'. Madden et al. (2013, p. 7) also found that girls are more likely than boys to restrict access to their profiles. Madden et al. (2013, p. 3) report that personal information young people provide on social media includes: a photo of themselves (91 per cent); school name (71 per cent); city or town where they live (71 per cent); email address (53 per cent); and mobile number (20 per cent). In addition, young people shared their real name (92 per cent), interests (84 per cent), birth date (82 per cent), relationship status (62 per cent), and videos of themselves (24 per cent) (Madden et al. 2013, p. 3). Madden et al. (2013, p. 2) report that most teens show a high level of confidence in managing their Facebook privacy settings. An integral part of privacy and reputation management for young people using social media is friend curation through which young people 'friend', 'unfriend' and 'block' as privacy management techniques (Madden et al. 2013, p. 9).

In other research, Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 11) describe how young people are most likely to share their first name (36 per cent), age (28 per cent), and/or email address (19 per cent). Only one in ten reportedly gave out more personal information, such as a photo of themselves, their school name, last name, mobile number, or a description of what they look like (Pieters and Krupin 2010, p. 11). This study reported that young people draw the line at giving out information such as parents' names, home addresses and school addresses (Pieters and Krupin 2010, p. 11). Interestingly, Christofides, Muise and Desmarais (2010, p. 7) describe how 'despite popular perceptions that it is young people who disclose a considerable amount of information online […] youth and adults are similar in their disclosure behaviours on Facebook'. This study also found that most young people and adults reported knowing how to use privacy settings, although a small proportion used them (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010, p. 7). Also, both youth and adult samples who reported 'having higher need for popularity and less awareness of the consequences of information sharing were more likely to disclose information about themselves on Facebook' (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010, p. 7). In an environment such as Facebook, the amount you disclose and

how much others contribute to your page may be the key ways to assess your popularity; popularity, in other words, is closely linked to your level of information disclosure (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010, p. 17). Interestingly, research has also shown that people who disclose more online are seen to be more trustworthy to their conversation partners (Henderson & Gilding 2004, p. 501), indicating that levels of online disclosure can affect relationships.

Bullying is a major, world-wide issue for young people, and combined with social media, cyber-bullying can be a very public and fast moving form of harassment. Bullying is an abuse of power, and can be direct and face-to-face or conducted through social media (Espelage & Goldblum 2014, para. 3). Espelage and Goldblum (2014, para. 3) define bullying as 'behavior that is intended to be hurtful and targets individuals perceived to be weaker and unable to defend themselves'. Cyber-bullying acts can 'snowball' out of the perpetrator's control, as a single act by one perpetrator can be repeated by others and is thus experienced multiple times by the victim (Livingstone & Smith 2014, p. 638).

Kids Helpline (2014) describes cyber-bullying as 'bullying that uses electronic means like the internet or mobile phones to aggressively and intentionally harm someone'. Cyber-bullying typically involves repeated behaviour and a power imbalance between perpetrator and victim (Price & Dalgleish 2010, p. 51). As Price and Dalgleish (2010, p. 51) describe: 'It extends beyond hurtful messages sent via email or text messaging to include forms such as threats, social exclusion tactics, spreading rumours and circulating defamatory images of the victim'. Price and Dalgleish (2010, p. 57) list various forms of cyber-bullying: name calling, abuse, harassment, exclusion, impersonation, threats of physical harm, defamation, and public humiliation. There is a variety of means for perpetrators to engage in cyber-bullying, such as email, text, social media, chat rooms and web-sites. Price and Dalgleish (2010, p. 51) conducted research with young Australians and found that cyber-bullying is a group phenomenon 'most prevalent during the transitional ages between primary and secondary school'. In Pieters and Krupin's research (2010, p. 13), 52 per cent of young people reported knowing someone who had experienced bullying online. They described bullying as including: embarrassing or mean information being posted online; rumours being spread online; passwords being hacked; being approached by strangers; or being cyber-pranked (Pieters & Krupin 2010, p. 13). While young people acknowledge witnessing cyber-bullying online, far fewer report to have ever been bullied or harassed in this way (seven per cent), and

only a small percentage admit to having been the instigators (Pieters & Krupin 2010, p. 14). Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 13) report that one in 10 young people admit to engaging in some form of cyber-bullying: involvement in a ‘cyber-prank’ (six per cent); sending anonymous emails (three per cent); spreading rumours online (three per cent); forwarding private information without permission (two per cent); or posting hurtful information about someone (two per cent).

Price and Dalgleish (2010, p. 52) offer two reasons that the impact of cyber-bullying may be more severe than traditional bullying: ‘the wider audience in which public humiliation or embarrassment can occur, and the increased level of invasiveness that is possible, in particular the ability to penetrate a victim’s home and/or bedroom’. Researchers have attributed the attraction of cyber-bullying to ‘the perceived anonymity’ that the Internet can provide to perpetrators (Price & Dalgleish 2010, p. 51). This opportunity to remain anonymous gives bullies a sense of power and control (Reeckman & Cannard 2009, p. 42). On social media, users are more identifiable than perhaps in a chat room, however they can take steps to make themselves less recognisable, such as using assumed names, withholding private information, or using fake accounts.

On Facebook, trolls are commonplace, known to be lurking and then attacking in groups to harass and bully others online. Blackman (2014) describes public trolling to involve a power-play of some kind which aims to disrupt the status quo. The most common advice for dealing with troll behaviour is to not ‘feed them’, meaning to avoid responding to or engaging with them (Blackman 2014). However, as Blackman (2014) points out, ignoring and not engaging with them is hard when trolls target spaces such as memorial pages, which Blackman likens to gravestone desecration.

In addition to the appeal of anonymity, the lack of regulation also draws perpetrators to cyber-bullying. Conversations online are often unsupervised, and there is little regulation governing what is said. Therefore, for perpetrators there are unlikely to be many consequences. Reeckman and Cannard (2009, p. 42) acknowledge how a disconnection from consequences and a lack of empathy for the victim can create a lack of inhibition for the bully. Bullying can affect young people’s academic and social lives, cause emotional distress, and may lead to violence or suicide (Mason 2008). Espelage and Goldblum (2014, para. 4) highlight how some groups of people are more likely to get bullied:

> […] children who present themselves as "different" are more likely targets than those who fit in comfortably to school norms. Children from stigmatized or marginalized groups, including those with psychiatric problems, physical disabilities, sexual and gender minorities, are at higher risk for being targets of bullying and for suicidal behavior.

Bullying and suicide among teens is a highly emotive and important topic to focus on in efforts for prevention and intervention. Duong and Bradshaw (cited in Espelage & Goldblum 2014, para. 2) point out that while the prevalence of bullying is high (approximately 20 to 28 per cent), 'most children who are bullied do not become suicidal'. However, as Espelage and Goldblum (2014, para. 6) write, 'even one suicide death that is triggered by a recent torment of bullying is too many'.

With the evolution of the Internet, a whole new dimension has been added to the issue of keeping young people safe. Online threats are pervasive and no longer limited to outside the home, but may now invade the home or bedroom (Belsey 2008; Pieters & Krupin 2010, p. 18; Reeckman & Cannard 2009, p. 42). Many young people have their own phones and use their own computers in the privacy of their bedrooms. As Christofides, Muise and Desmarais (2010, p. 11) state: 'This technology gives children increased privacy from their parents, and parents increased privacy from their children'. The advancements in technology and the increased uptake in usage have 'increased the opportunities for connection with other people, though it has also changed the control that we have over our information' (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010, p. 11).

Conduct risks

Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 10) describe conduct risks as including: gambling, illegal downloads and hacking; bullying or harassing another; creating and uploading pornographic material; and providing advice on things such as pro-anorexia or suicide. Activities deemed risky for young people include taking selfies and sexting. These activities are conduct risks, in which young people themselves contribute to risky content.

With the rise of social media and the popularity of mobile devices with inbuilt cameras, the 'selfie' has cemented itself as a common way of taking and sharing photos with friends. Franco (2013, para. 10) explains that 'in a visual culture, the selfie quickly and easily shows,

not tells, how you're feeling, where you are, what you're doing'. The selfie is not just a mark of vanity but can communicate in a way other media cannot. For example, a text may not convey how you are feeling, but a selfie can bring clarity in an instant (Franco 2013, para. 11). Franco (2013, para. 4) writes:

> […] a well-stocked collection of selfies seems to get attention. And attention seems to be the name of the game when it comes to social networking […] Attention is power. And if you are someone people are interested in, then the selfie provides something very powerful, from the most privileged perspective possible.

Nelson (2013), a year 11 student, explains how selfies are posted online with the anticipation of positive feedback and 'likes', evidence of the poster's increased popularity. As Nelson (2013, para. 11) shares:

> Seeing some of these images can feel too intimate. It's almost as though we're peering through a window. Some photos may be of girls showing skin, or girls lying on a bed. Just about all are seeking some sort of approval from their friends. The aim is not to communicate joy but to score a position.

A trend of 2014 was uploading selfies to 'sprouter' pages on social media. Urban Dictionary (n.d) explains that 'sprouter' is a term used very loosely towards a good-looking girl blossoming into a woman. Deutrom (2014b) explains the term as describing a young person who will eventually 'sprout' into an attractive adult. Ziniak (2014) describes how, in this disturbing trend, young girls are being encouraged to post provocative pictures of themselves online. These photos are then collected on social media sites for others to view. One account, called 'Brisbane Sprouters', encouraged girls in years 8, 9 and 10 (aged 12 to 15) to send in their hottest photographs for hundreds of followers to view (Deutrom 2014b). These accounts feature both school girls and boys, and Queensland Police fear are a new wave of child sex crimes and cyber-stalking could result (Ziniak 2014). This fear is heightened with sprouter sites displaying links to individual Instagram accounts, participants' full names, and, in some cases, the names of their schools (Deutrom 2014b). Bravehearts criminologist Carol Ronken (cited in Deutrom 2014a) believes:

> Young people are posting images of themselves that can be seen as sexual because they're trying to get that self-worth from the people they're connecting with on the Internet. I think young people know that it's a risk but they don't see it as a risk to themselves.

Sexting is common practice among young people. As the Australian Government (n.d.) explains: ‘Sexting is the sending of provocative or sexual photos, messages or videos. They are generally sent using a mobile phone but can also include posting this type of material online’. Sexting among young people has been made possible by near-ubiquitous access to mobile technology and the popularity of social media. boyd (2011, para. 11) describes how, as access to webcams increased, the cost of mobile phones with cameras decreased, and thus the popularity of online photo-sharing increased, resulting in ‘a myriad of teenagers around the world start[ing to] tak[e] pictures of themselves and posting them onto the Internet’. boyd (2011, para. 11) adds that ‘these technologies come together at a time when teenagers are racing into networked publics, bringing every element of teen drama into the digital environment’. However, most sexting goes unnoticed (boyd 2011, para. 14).

A recent six-year longitudinal study (Temple & Choi 2014) conducted on teen sexting and sexual behaviour found that teen sexting is common, is a new ‘normal’ part of adolescent sexual development, and is not firmly limited to ‘at risk’ adolescents (Temple & Choi 2014, p. 1291). The study showed that sending sexually explicit photos and texts was an indicator of general sexual activity and was not associated with risky sexual behaviours over time (Temple & Choi 2014, p. 1291). McAteer (2014) highlights how this new study shows that sexting has become the new ‘first base’ for young people. Temple and Choi (2014, p. 1291) describe how sexting may ‘communicate to the recipient a level of openness to sexual activity, promote a belief that sex is expected, and increase sexual advances, all of which may increase the chance of subsequent sexual behavior’. It was reported by Temple and Choi (2014, p. 1290) that ‘sending naked pictures of oneself was associated with being sexually active 1 year later’. Sexting was differentiated between active (sending a photo) and passive (asking or being asked for a photo), with active sexting correlated with an increased probability of sexual activity (Temple & Choi 2014, p. 1291). boyd (2011, para. 4) states that ‘teen sexting is a very rational act with very irrational consequences’. While sexting has emerged through advances in technology, boyd (2011, para. 13) reminds us that ‘there’s nothing new about teens taking explicit photos of themselves’; they are exploring their sexuality. As Livingstone and Smith (2014, p. 640) point out: ‘As with pornography, teenagers and adults may not agree on where to draw the line between acceptable sexual exploration between peers and inappropriate or abusive messaging’. As boyd (2011, para. 11) puts it, ‘the line between what is sexy and what is sexually explicit’ is blurred.

Young people's morality 'at risk' online

Young people are often framed as 'at risk', and are considered this way in terms of their physical safety, but also their morals. Parental concerns exist about the impact social media can have on young people's character and moral development. (Morgan & Kristjansson 2017, p. 4). Recent research has found that in a sample of 1,728 parents polled, more than half were concerned about young people's moral development being hampered by social media (Morgan 2016, para. 1). Morgan and Kristjansson (2017, p. 5) describe social media as a space 'where moral values are put to the test, just as they are offline, and social media can inevitably lead to both moral and immoral behaviours'.

Everyday experiences are complex, and often involve concerns of a moral nature, such as a sense of fairness and welfare (Pasupathi & Wainryb 2010, p. 59). Fundamentally, morality focuses on distinctions between right and wrong, do or do not, and good or bad (Recchia, Wainryb, Bourne & Pasupathi 2015, p. 864). Harrod (1981, p. 5) states that moral agency is 'the way in which the world is apprehended [by a person] in terms of a realm of value meanings'. Turiel (1998) describes moral development as the process through which individuals obtain a sense of right and wrong to use in assessing their own actions and the actions of others. Pasupathi and Wainryb (2010, p. 55) define moral agency as 'people's understanding and experience of themselves (and others) as agents whose morally relevant actions are based in goals and beliefs'. As moral agents, people engage in a process of negotiation between individuals, their social and cultural worlds, and the properties of the acts being negotiated (Pasupathi & Wainryb 2010, p. 56). Holland, Thomson, Henderson, McGrellis and Sharpe (2000, p. 289) highlight that trust and reciprocity are important to the development of the independent moral agent.

Moral agents are beings capable of acting with reference to a sense of right and wrong. People can enact their agency by acting in accordance with their own and others' experiences with desires, beliefs and emotions (Pasupathi & Wainryb 2010, p. 58). All people, at every stage of their lives, have a complex set of concerns, both moral and nonmoral, that they bring to bear, flexibly, on a complex social world (Pasupathi & Wainryb 2010, p. 60). Developmentally, children develop a sense of morality as distinct from other concerns early in life (Turiel 1998). As Pasupathi and Wainryb (2010, p. 58) note, the enactment of moral agency in young people depends on their capacity to understand beliefs and desires in order

to make sense of their experience. Britton (2015, p. 505) reflects on the societal contradiction of young people being increasingly expected to exhibit morally acceptable behaviour and attitudes, while also being considered morally incompetent and unaccountable.

Holland et al. (2000, p. 276) showed that the development of young people's moral understanding included a process of moving from being a dependent 'moral learner' to an independent moral agent. This transition is achieved through a process of experimentation in recognising and enacting right and wrong (Holland et al. 2000, p. 276). During this transition, the moral 'learner' moves from trusting in the authority of an external source to placing trust in the authority of the self (Holland et al. 2000, p. 276). Thus, becoming an independent moral agent involves trusting one's own judgement and choices (Holland et al. 2000, p. 291). While Britton (2015) and Holland et al. (2000) position young people as 'moral becomings' and 'moral learners', others believe this perception should be altered. For example, Sharpe and Thomson (2005, p. 83) suggest considering young people as active moral agents, rather than as moving towards moral competence. They stress that positioning young people as active moral agents does not mean that young people are clear on their moral choices, nor that such values or choices will remain the same over time (Sharpe & Thomson 2005, p. 83).

Research has demonstrated that young people are active moral agents (Britton 2015; Frankel 2012; Holland et al. 2000; Pasupathi & Wainryb 2010; Recchia et al. 2015; Sharpe & Thomson 2005; Thomson & Holland 2002). Britton (2015) conducted research on young people as moral beings, and found that they presented as morally competent agents. Alongside this presentation of self, young people questioned the taken-for-granted moral competence of adults (Britton 2015, p. 495). Britton (2015, p. 497) notes that young people are reaching an age where they are increasingly expected to demonstrate morally acceptable behaviour and a moral understanding of the world. In Britton's (2015) research, young people presented their moral self by contrasting their own behaviour with that of other young people, which they did by distancing themselves from others whom they perceived to be unlike themselves. While young people presented as moral beings, they also acknowledged themselves as moral becomings or moral beings in the making (Britton 2015, p. 495). This was done through the recollection of situations when they had exhibited morally unacceptable behaviour, showing critical reflection on the choices and consequences of their actions. Young people also acknowledged referring to significant others' advice on issues of morality, but also demonstrated being active moral agents in that they considered external information

they felt to be reasonable or relevant and disregarded that which they viewed as trivial (Britton 2015, p. 500).

Morality in the online world was explored in research by Hookway (2011, 2012), who describes contemporary morality as a ‘DIY project’ (2011, 2012), establishing that the driving moral force is the self, not external authorities (Hookway 2012, p. 6). People are morally capable and use the three configurations of DIY morality for navigating everyday moral action (Hookway 2012, p. 7): the choosing; the embodied; and the authentic feeling.

Recent research by the University of Birmingham (2018, p. 2) found that social media ‘can encourage and enable young people to display and develop good character’. This research also found that young people aged 16 to 18 are likely to have given emotional support to a friend via social media (University of Birmingham 2018, p. 2). They report that high levels of moral sensitivity among young people on social media indicate they can recognise situations in the online world that require a moral judgement (University of Birmingham 2018, p. 2).

Moral and media panics

The discourse of youth predominantly frames young people as an uninformed, ‘at risk’, vulnerable group of people. Social media is now considered to be a risky space. This is an important area to examine because it highlights how risk thinking has contributed to the popular way of conceptualising young people as vulnerable to predators and dangers online. Ideas from the risk society thesis coupled with the overwhelmingly popular way of thinking about young people as ‘at risk’ and vulnerable online has created a sense of moral panic which I will now explore.

Moral panics

Societies are subject to moral panics (Cohen 1987, p. 9). Research on moral panics by Stanley Cohen, specifically on the battles between the Mods and Rockers, describes perceived threats to societal values that are dramatised by the mass media (Hobbs 2001, p. 209). Cohen’s (1987) work introduced the concept of the ‘moral panic’, which acts ‘on behalf

of the dominant social order' (McRobbie & Thornton 1995, p. 562). Wilkins (1997, p. 4) describes a moral panic as being 'characterized by a wave of public concern, anxiety, and terror about something, usually perceived as a threat to society'. Such panics arise during times of uncertainty, when moral boundaries are unclear, allowing the moral panic to be seen as authentic. Moral panics are concerned with moral values, societal regularities, and the distinction between the acceptable and less acceptable (McRobbie & Thornton 1995, p. 572). According to Recuber (2009, p. 159), moral panics consist of five elements: a heightened level of concern over the behaviour of a group or category of people; an increased level of hostility towards this group; a wide consensus that the threat is real and caused by members of the group; a disproportionate degree of concern that is greater than other threats; and that panics may occur suddenly and decrease just as quickly.

Moral panics are realised when a phenomenon is defined as a threat to societal values and interests and its nature is presented in a stylised and stereotypical fashion by the media (Cohen 1987, p. 9). Consumer culture is inseparable from the public imagination that results in moral panics (Recuber 2009, p. 158). Wilkins (1997, p. 6) reports three components of media presentation that fuel moral panics: exaggeration in reporting; the repetition of fallacies; and misleading pictures and snappy titles. Novelty plays an important role in the creation of moral panics, as a new form of deviance can be seen to be more threatening than those already familiar to society (Recuber 2009, p. 164). Moral panics are usually short-lived and produced through public concerns about particular events or situations (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 690).

According to McRobbie and Thornton (1995, p. 560), moral panics are the 'way in which daily events are brought to the attention of the public'. These panics are a 'standard response' and make use of 'sometimes weary, even ridiculous rhetoric' (McRobbie & Thornton 1995, p. 560). McRobbie and Thornton (1995, p. 567) question the 'usefulness' of the concept of 'moral panic' in current society, suggesting that the anxieties which give rise to them are more adequately described as 'media panics' (McRobbie and Thornton 1995) and 'technopanics' (Marwick 2008). Marwick (2008, para. 23) describes technopanics as having three characteristics: they focus on new media forms; they pathologise young people's use of this media; and they manifest cultural anxiety to modify or regulate young people's behaviour.

Social media panics

Certain vulnerable groups who are viewed as threats to societal values are the focus of today's 'mass-mediated moral panics'. Young people have often been the target for moral panics historically. Cohen (1987, p. 9) observes that the emergence of various forms of youth culture has often been the source of moral panics. Over time, parental concerns have arisen about young people engaging with any new medium: the television, the telephone, and now the Internet (Wigand, Wood & Mande 2010, p. 3). As boyd (2014, p. 14) writes: 'Any new technology that captures widespread attention is likely to provoke serious hand wringing, if not full-blown panic'. In 1997, Wilkins (1997, p. 4) pointed to children's and young people's exposure to pornography on the Internet as an example of a then current moral panic. As time passed and technology advanced, each new form of technology has produced its accompanying anxieties. For example, young people's online sexual expression through texting is widely framed through 'gendered pedagogies of shame and regret', resulting in e-safety curricula on sexting (Livingstone & Third 2017, p. 663). Also, Hjorth and Hendry (2015 p. 2) highlight that camera phone practices among young people have produced new anxieties, about which 'moral panics are revealed'. On this basis, it seems reasonable to argue that the current trend for young people to engage in online social communication can be understood as a contemporary phenomenon that has created a sense of moral panic about the risks and dangers for young people. Moral panics exist around cyber-bullying, predation, pornography, heightened narcissism, information overload, and excessive screen time (White, Wyn & Robards 2017, p. 328). Gordon (2006, para. 4) describes how some parents fear that 'the digital environment sucks children into an addictive social black hole – a hotbed of pornography, chat risks and cyberbullies'.

In modernity, society continues to change rapidly to stimulate the development of new technologies, creating anxiety (Shen, Shen & Xing 2015, p. 1). Furedi (2002, p. 34) recognises that public concern is not a direct response to a technological process, but is predicated on an already heightened sense of anxiety within society. Risk anxiety is described by Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn (1998, p. 690) as a 'constant and pervasive feature of everyday consciousness, managed through everyday practices'. There exists a risk anxiety in relation to the safety of children, and that concern has become a constant subject of discussion (Furedi 2002, p. 115). While young people are popularly perceived as tech-savvy Internet users, when it comes to risks, they are instead portrayed as potential victims

(Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 365). Livingstone and Smith (2014, p. 636) describe how Internet and mobile use is 'becoming more private and inaccessible to parental oversight'. boyd (2014, p. 10) asserts that social media sites such as Facebook provide to young people 'new opportunities to participate in public life' and that is what 'concerns many anxious adults'. Risk anxiety is mainly expressed as fear *for* children, through worry for their safety and well-being, but also as fear *of* children, of what they could potentially do if they step out of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for people of their age (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 691).

Many see any degree of risk as unbearable when it comes to young people (Byron 2008, p. 20). Threats to young people's well-being are considered more pernicious than comparable threats to adults (Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998, p. 695). Further, distinguishing risks from opportunities is a matter of perspective, with young people's viewpoints perhaps at odds with parents' or other adults'. For example, meeting new people or exploring intimate relationships may be perceived as an opportunity by young people, but as a risk by parents (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 367). Parental perceptions of the likelihood of online risk to their child are negatively associated with their perceived ability to cope (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 369). Parents worry less when they perceive their children to be encountering little risk, but show concern about their children's coping abilities when the risk is deemed to be higher (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 369).

The anxieties around young people on the Internet can compound with media stories linking anti-social and criminal behaviour with technology use (Byron 2008, p. 24). Frequently, we are confronted with media reports warning against the risks associated with social media. A quick Google search of news articles on young people and social media reveals titles such as 'Sex predators targeting children in explicit group chats on Twitter' (Rogan 2019a), 'Facebook and Google 'must do more to protect young people from pro-suicide content' (McDermott 2019), 'Teenagers' sex videos shared by paedophiles' (Rogan 2019b), and 'Anxiety on rise among the young in social media age' (Booth 2019). Public concerns and fears are often fuelled and heightened by lurid media reports of young people being persuaded or seduced into physically meeting with people they have met online, ending in disastrous outcomes or safety and security 'horror' stories (Byron 2008; Holmes 2009; Nash & Peltu 2005). As McRobbie and Thornton (1995, p. 565) state, the presentation of moral panics to society 'turn[s] difference into defiance, lifestyle into social upheaval, leisure into

revolt'. The 'much-hyped concerns' of social media panics are 'rooted in data that are blown out of proportion or are deliberately exaggerated to spark fear' (boyd 2014, p. 16). The result is magnified anxieties and reinforced fears about young people online (boyd 2014, p. 17).

Holmes (2009, p. 1175) highlights how the discourse around young people's use of communication through the Internet has presented this behaviour as a 'problem to be tackled', then argues that such a perception is misguided, and that the level of risk to young people from online communication is minimal. Holmes (2009, p. 1175) believes that, for most young people, online communication is safe, and where risks do occur, they are managed. Likewise, Joyce (2014), highlights how social media sites and apps can provide some very positive and satisfying interactions for users, if the risks are managed sensibly. Hendry, Robards and Stanford (2017, p. 136) highlight the need 'to look beyond simplistic or alarmist analyses of social media use by young people'. Current technopanics pathologise young people's use of social media (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 137), 'and this concern leads to attempts to change, or control' that use (Dunkels, Franberg & Hallgren 2011, p. 3).

Media panics about young people online create a highly protective, even overprotective, approach to children and young people (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 365). As Byron (2008, p. 20) explains:

> Concerns about risks to children and young people have led some to argue that we live in a 'risk-averse culture' which, while aiming to protect children from risks, increases their vulnerabilities by denying them opportunities to develop risk identification, assessment and management skills that can help children and young people keep themselves safe.

In agreement, Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn (1998, p. 701) argue that risk anxiety, produced by a desire to keep children safe, can have negative consequences for children, such as restricted autonomy and reduced opportunities to develop necessary life skills.

Staksrud and Livingstone (2009, p. 364) argue that an over-protective and risk-averse culture restricts the freedom of online exploration that is encouraged for children in other areas. Byron (2008, p. 21) likens the potential risks and potential benefits of young people using the Internet to climbing a tree: the opportunity to find information online is coupled with the risk of finding adult material; the benefits of making new friends come with the risk of bullying or harmful contact from strangers; just as climbing a tree can be exciting and fun giving a sense

of achievement, but there is always the risk of falling. Although there are risks involved in communicating through social media, these should not overshadow the tangible benefits of online social interactions. Joyce (2013) argues that although young people may make mistakes online, they may then gain a greater understanding of the risks and ways to manage those risks to protect themselves. In further support, Holmes (2009, p. 1186) claims that the discourse of young people as naïve innocents denies young people the self-efficacy to manage their own safety, and undermines a wide range of potential benefits that could come from online communication.

Missing young people's voices

A dominant theme in the existing research, influenced by social media panics, is that young people should be educated by adults about strategies that will keep them 'safe' online. This point is simply stated by Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2001, p. 3013), who note that 'youth should be instructed how to minimize their risk'. Arguing for the role of schools in the promotion of young people's safety online, Shariff (2005, p. 462) claims that schools must 'define acceptable boundaries for their students' social relationships in cyber-space'. Reinforcing this view, Berson (2000, p. 162) states that 'regardless of students' knowledge and ability in using technology, educators still possess more refined judgement about responsible decision making than their students'. The vulnerability of young people, and their lack of expertise, is thus promoted in emerging policy developments and in public discourse in this field. Reeckman and Cannard (2009, p. 43) highlight how most literature on addressing cyber-bullying is directed at schools and includes adult-driven strategies. Scott, Jackson and Backett-Milburn (1998, p. 691) also highlight how risk assessments and judgements are often made by adults, from adult perspectives, on behalf of young people.

Consideration of how to promote young people's safety online has not incorporated the belief and confidence that young people are able to be 'the informers' rather than 'the informed' in their engagement with digital technologies. Young people's voices rarely shape the public discourse surrounding their networked lives (boyd 2014, p. x). The perspective of young people in need of instruction must be disrupted. As Sharland (2006, p. 259) argues, we need to consider young people as agents of their own lives. Also arguing this alternative viewpoint, Mitchell, Finkelhor and Wolak (2001, p. 3014) suggest that prevention efforts and strategies

should ‘come from peers and other sources credible with that group’. Showing their agreement with this view, Walker and Bakopoulous (2004, p. 2) suggest supporting ‘young people in reflecting on their own practice as internet users and the consequences of their internet interactions on others’.

There is a need to consider what risk means to young people, its dynamics, and the relationships and resources surrounding it (Sharland 2006, p. 260). France (2000, p. 328) stresses the importance of more research into young people’s beliefs about risk and risk taking. France (2000, p. 328) argues that it is adult and academic concerns that define the boundaries and context of discussion, and that greater attention to young people’s voices is needed to gain a more explicit understanding.

Hence an alternative focus for supporting young people’s safety online is emerging that argues that adults who want to encourage safe Internet behaviour should take advantage of, and build upon, the increasing awareness and technological sophistication of young people who go online (Tynes 2007, p. 582). Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 30) describe how researchers in this field should seek ways to distance research from adult assumptions, especially from ‘media-led moral panics’. Reinforcing this view, boyd (2014, p. xi) urges people to ‘suspend your assumptions about youth in an effort to understand the social lives of networked teens’. As Nelson (2013, para. 15), a year 11 student who wrote an article for the Age in relation to teenage girls’ selfies states:

> A common adult reaction to social media is to restrict things, as if that could ever be possible. You can’t force kids to be nice. The real problem isn’t something tangible like sexting or bullying, which adults focus on in patronising and unimaginative ways. The real problem relates to conformity. Kids are compelled to act the stereotype, because those who opt out commit themselves to social leprosy. Social media doesn’t need adult control. What we need is some good taste.

Young people managing risk online

Byron (2008, p. 26) believes there has been a shift away from the concerns of digital media towards understanding the benefits for young people. Holmes (2009, p. 1189) stresses the importance of doing so, of moving away from a risk discourse and towards a greater

exploration of how online communication can be beneficial for young people. Holmes (2009, p. 1190) believes the risk discourse to be 'misguided and based on evidence which is open to interpretation'. Staksrud and Livingstone (2009, p. 366) pose the following questions: 'To what degree can children themselves be expected to cope with risk on the Internet?'; and 'How much exposure to risk, under what circumstances, might engender resilience rather than harm?'.

Given the wealth of research and literature on risks online for young people, it is important, then, to explore how young people respond to such risks online. There is some emerging research which acknowledges and gives prominence to young people's voices on the issue of online safety. Recent research gives support to the perspective of young people as confident, tech-savvy users who can positively manage their online experiences.

Robards (2010, p. 1) argues that young people in Australia are 'developing increasingly complex strategies for managing their online privacy and social interactions'. Through exposure to risk, reliance can develop (Coleman & Hagell 2007, p. 14). Young people's coping strategies depend on how they themselves regard the risk (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 382). Robards (2010, p. 3) highlights how maintaining privacy and control on a social networking site requires a deliberate strategy for managing friendship. Some theorists support that young people apply a cost-benefit approach to dealing with the risks they face online (Hoofnagle, King, Li & Turow 2010, p. 4). For example, the benefits of looking cool among their peers may outweigh concerns about negative consequences, especially if the negative outcomes are not likely to happen immediately (Hoofnagle et al. 2010, p. 5).

As Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 9) state: 'Today's youth are increasingly confident in their ability to be safe and responsible when using the internet'. Their study in 2010 showed that young people's confidence in their ability to be safe online had increased since a previous study in 2008, and that 94 per cent of young people agreed that they knew how to be safe online (Pieters & Krupin 2010, p. 9). The research also showed that three in four teens (75 per cent) felt they would know what to do if they faced bullying or harassment online, which was significantly higher than the study two years previously. In Pieters and Krupin's (2010, p. 14) research, the young people who had been bullied or harassed online had adjusted their behaviour as a result. More than half adjusted their privacy options, including changing the privacy settings on their social networking accounts and changing their passwords. Other protective behaviours included choosing to delete certain pictures or posts (21 per cent) and

deleting certain personal information from their profile (21 per cent) (Pieters & Krupin 2010, p. 14). As Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 18) write: 'It seems that many kids are clued in to these risks and choose to take safer steps in their online behavior in ways such as keeping important information private, avoiding cyberbullying behaviors, and keeping their parents as allies'.

In research focused on cyber-bullying by Price and Dalgleish (2010), young people were demonstrated to have used coping strategies to combat being cyber-bullied. These coping strategies included both offline and online techniques. Popular online strategies included blocking the bully (71.4 per cent), removing the person from their friend list (45.9 per cent), and changing their own avatar/mobile number (23.2 per cent) (Price & Dalgleish 2010, p. 56). Offline coping strategies were also used by young people, including: confronting the bully (44.2 per cent), telling a friend (39.4 per cent), staying offline (32.3 per cent), to stop looking (29.7 per cent), telling a parent or carer (29.4 per cent), telling a teacher or principal (24.6 per cent), retaliating (16.1 per cent), telling a sibling (11.7 per cent), telling kids helpline (9.1 per cent), or telling another adult (6 per cent) (Price & Dalgleish 2010, p. 56). This research also reported advice that young people would give others being cyber-bullied. Advice on coping strategies included: speaking out, ignoring, avoiding, being positive, and retaliating (Price & Dalgleish 2010, p. 56). This study demonstrated that most young people were familiar with, and active users of, online strategies to deal with cyber-bullying.

The EU Kids Online review found that children are developing and using strategies to cope with online risks and gaining confidence in the process (Livingstone & Haddon 2009). Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 22) argue that:

> […] it is inherent to childhood and especially adolescence to take risks, push boundaries and evade adult scrutiny – this is how children gain resilience. On the one hand, genuine and unacceptable risks should be addressed and where possible prevented, but on the other hand, children learn to cope with the world through testing their capacities and adjusting their actions in the light of lessons learned.

Staksrud and Livingstone (2009) also conducted research into children and risk online, revealing their actions and reactions when faced with perceived risks. They found that the frequency of exposure to perceived online risks was fairly high, but that most children adopt strategies to cope (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 364). Positive strategies were used by children, which included telling someone and seeking help from friends. The most common

strategy was to remain neutral, by ignoring the experience, for example. Pornography and violent content were typically ignored and bullying messages deleted. A minority of children were found to exacerbate the risks, for example by passing risky content on to friends. Staksrud and Livingstone (2009, p. 380) also reported that face-to-face meetings with online contacts mostly resulted in ‘a good time’. Interestingly, most strategies used by children excluded adult involvement.

Holmes (2009, p. 1177) argues that ‘there is little evidence to suggest young people are at significant risk and, where risks are present, most young people are able to safely negotiate them’. Hoofnagle et al. (2010, p. 20) demonstrated that young people do care about online privacy. Research by Holmes (2009, p. 1181) showed that young people are considering the issue of sharing personal information online and that they are discerning about what they do share. Holmes (2009, p. 1181) highlights that young people protect themselves online through actions such as making their profiles inaccessible to those people not listed as friends.

In adolescence it is important that young people learn to anticipate and cope with risk in order to become resilient (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 364). Through this resilience to risk, children can learn how to navigate the wider world, learn from mistakes, and recover from incidents (Staksrud & Livingstone 2009, p. 365). Joyce (2013) reminds us that most people make mistakes in their youth; it is how we learn. Holmes (2009, p. 1185) found little evidence to support the perception of teens being naïve innocents. Rather, young people are showing ‘considerable cognitive adaptations to the online environment and [are] actively manag[ing] their own safety’, and exhibit high levels of competency and resilience (Holmes 2009, p. 1185). While there has been serious harm for some young people online, for the overwhelming majority, risk is minimal and easily negotiated (Holmes 2009, p. 1185).

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the dominant negative narrative of young people and risk on social media. The Internet is viewed as risky and young people as ‘at risk’ in this space, engaging in risky activities online. There are concerns about young people’s engagement with these activities, as well as that their *morality* may be ‘at risk’. These descriptions are

reflective of a risk anxiety which has resulted in social media panics. A reaction to such social media panics is a desire on the part of adults to educate young people about risk online.

This literature review helps illustrate the need for an alternative voice to investigate the topic. There are legitimate concerns about young people and risks online, but the risk narrative of young people's vulnerability has overtaken and almost silenced an alternative view. There is much more to be considered to achieve a refined understanding of young people and risk on social media. Discussions are missing young people's voices. Therefore, my research takes a youth-centred approach to allow for a more complete consideration of the complex context of young people and risk on social media.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The previous chapters have shown how the topic of young people and risk on social media is often narrated by adults. An exploration of this topic would be incomplete without hearing from young people themselves; a youth-centred approach was therefore taken to conduct this research. Young people were my only participants in this research as I wanted to give prominence to their voices. The research was designed to listen to young people's opinions and stories, and to observe their behaviour online. I also sought to move beyond fixed ideas about risk, and therefore adopted the sociocultural theory of risk to inform this research. This meant designing a research method that could focus on how risk is perceived through culture and could adequately explore young people's social interactions. Because of this, it was necessary to conduct ethnography online to observe and speak to young people within their cultural space on Facebook. The research methods were designed to reflect the sociocultural theory of risk and to foreground young people's voices. Consequently, I conducted a netnography of the ideas, actions and interactions of young people on Facebook.

This chapter focuses on the methods used in this qualitative and exploratory research. First, I recount the aim of the research and research questions; second, the methodological approach. Third, I discuss the research setting of social media and Facebook; fourth, the sampling and recruitment methods. Fifth, I present the data collection methods, and sixth, explain the data analysis and interpretation. The chapter draws to a close with a discussion of the ethics of the research.

Aim of the research and research questions

The purpose of this research has been to gain an empirical understanding of how young people engage with risks on social media. This research has asked the question:

- How do young people engage with risk through their everyday practices on Facebook?

I also asked three sub questions:

- What are the everyday practices of young people on Facebook?
- How do young people understand risk in their everyday practices on Facebook?
- How do young people interact with risk in their everyday practices on Facebook?

Methodology

Postmodern qualitative research

This research was guided by a postmodern framework, according to which all individuals have different realities, different stories, and different ways of expressing these realities and stories. Postmodernism argues that there is no single truth, but rather many truths and many realities. These multiple realities are constantly 'formed and re-formed, constructed and reconstructed' (Liamputtong 2013, p. 13). Researchers working from a postmodern perspective 'attempt to deconstruct the meanings that participants have about their lived experiences and the language they use' (Liamputtong 2013, p. 13), challenging traditional premises. Realities are constructed within specific social and cultural contexts, and therefore the meanings can only be understood within those contexts (Liamputtong 2013, p. 13).

The elements of postmodernism outlined above are guiding principles to how qualitative research is done and the ways in which the voices of participants are represented (Liamputtong 2013, p. 13). Using a postmodern framework, the focus of research moves from large scale to small scale qualitative research (Liamputtong 2013, p. 13). Postmodern approaches often draw on qualitative sources, and a qualitative approach was adopted for this research. Alston and Bowles (2003, p. 64) state that 'qualitative methodology enables you to further your knowledge of the situation when seeking to describe social reality'. This method provides the opportunity for rich, in-depth data (Brewer 2007, p. 26). It is flexible and fluid, and easily accommodates change and development in fields of inquiry (Alston & Bowles 2003, p. 67; Liamputtong 2013, p. 305). The context of words and events is an integral part of primary qualitative data (Mauch & Park 2003, p. 20). Liamputtong (2009, p. 25) writes that '[r]ich and thick description is crucial in the presentation of qualitative research' and participants can 'provide rich accounts of their experiences' (Liamputtong 2013, p. 14).

Mason (2002, p. 1) describes how qualitative research can explore a variety of dimensions of the social world, including the way that relationships work, and the significance of the meanings they generate. Liamputtong (2013, p. xxi) provides several reasons as to why qualitative research is valuable, including that it:

- Is useful when there is the need for understanding complex issues in greater detail, which can only be acquired through talking directly with people,
- Is useful when there is a need to understand the contexts that play a crucial role in participants' lives,
- Allows for the presentation of more silenced voices, and
- Allows people to share their stories and provides empowerment to these people.

Accordingly, qualitative methods of data collection and analysis were used in this research to explore how young people engaged with risk on Facebook. Given the focus of the research on the generation of meanings from the perspective of participants, the study employed an interpretative framework to guide the design of the study's methods (Locke, Silverman & Spirduso 2004, p. 150; Mason 2002, p. 3).

Ethnography

This research used ethnography to explore how young people engaged with risk online. My conceptual framework for this research was youth-centred, and was influenced by the sociocultural theory of risk. Therefore, ethnography was the approach required, allowing exploration of young people and risk on social media. Ethnography is a methodology, or an approach to research, but it is also a method or a means of collecting data (Brewer 2000, p. 143). Atkinson, Coffey, Delamont, Lofland and Lofland (2001, p. 175) state that ethnography 'has survived and flourished for over a century' and consider it to be 'robust and flexible'. Fetterman (1989, p. 11) describes ethnography as the 'art and science of describing a group or culture'. Ethnography aims to capture people's social meanings and ordinary activities in naturally occurring settings (Brewer 2000, p. 56). Ethnography is characterised by small-scale research which explores the social meanings of people in a particular setting (Brewer 2000, p. 176).

Ethnographers must keep an open mind about the group or culture they are studying, but this quality does not imply any lack of rigor (Fetterman 2010, p. 1). Ethnography is premised on the view that the central aim of the social sciences is to understand people's actions and experiences of the world (Brewer 2000, p. 11). This methodology involves 'intimate familiarity' with everyday practice and with the meanings of these social actions (Brewer 2000, p. 11). Brewer (2000, p. 163) highlights four imperatives for such research: we need to ask people what meanings they give to their social world; we need to ask them in such a way that they can tell us in their own terms; we need to ask them in depth, because these meanings are often taken for granted and deeply embedded; and we need to address the social setting that gives substance and context to these meanings.

As Liamputtong (2013, p. 6) explains, 'culture is the essence of ethnography'. Ethnography is rooted in the study of culture in anthropology, working with 'distant cultures', but later shifted to sociology and focused on more 'local subcultures' (Liamputtong 2013, p. 6). This methodological framework is interested in how people create meanings and how people behave in their cultural contexts (Liamputtong 2013, p. 6). As Brewer (2000, p. 37) states, ethnography is understood as 'telling it like it is', 'getting close to the inside', and 'giving an insider's account'. From this insider's perspective, understanding and description of the social and cultural scene is achieved (Fetterman 2010, p. 2). Ethnography reflects cultural relativism, a perspective which argues that cultures should be considered within their own social and cultural contexts (Liamputtong 2013, p. 7). This insider's perception induces the acknowledgement and acceptance of multiple realities (Fetterman 1989, p. 31).

The most characteristic element of ethnographic research is fieldwork (Fetterman 2010, p. 8). Using ethnographic methods, researchers engage in extensive and prolonged interaction with research participants. As Brewer (2000, p. 61) acknowledges, ethnographic methods are 'thus not easy or quick'. However, Hobbs (2001, p. 214) acknowledges that the length of time researchers spend in the field can vary enormously. Through immersion in the lives of those whom we wish to understand, interpretive understanding evolves (James 2001, p. 246). Ethnographic methodology gives priority to observation as its primary source of information (Gobo 2008, p. 5). This participant observation involves gathering data by means of participation in the daily lives of research participants in their natural setting; watching, observing and talking to them to uncover their activities, social meanings and interpretations

(Brewer 2000, p. 59). This allows for an understanding of the ways that ‘individuals express their values, beliefs, and actions in and through culture’ (Liamputtong 2013, p. 7).

Although ethnography is distinguishable from other methodologies due to its focus on observation, ethnographers often use other methods in their research to clarify aspects which observation alone does not make fully comprehensible (Gobo 2008, p. 190). Gobo (2008, p. 191) describes the ethnographic interview as aiming to reveal the cultural meanings of participants, and to explore aspects of the culture revealed through observation.

Ethnography allows for an in-depth understanding of people’s behaviours (Liamputtong 2013, p. 162). Ethnographers fully immerse themselves in the research, and therefore the culture being explored, by placing themselves within that culture (Liamputtong 2013, p. 7). An ethnographic account can then be created, providing cultural themes and patterns (Liamputtong 2013, p. 7). Liamputtong (2013, p. 162) describes how ethnography differs from other methods in that instead of simply *studying* people, ethnography seeks to *learn* from people. Ethnographers seek to be taught by people rather than to study them as objects, as is often done in other forms of research (Liamputtong 2013, p. 163). Participants are ‘key informants’ and play an important role in ethnographic research because ethnographers work with participants to produce a rich description of the culture in context (Liamputtong 2013, p. 173).

Regarding young people specifically, James (2001, p. 246) argues that ethnography permits ‘a view of children as competent interpreters of the social world’. Ethnography allows children to be competent informers and interpreters about their own lives and the lives of others (James 2001, p. 250). This view incorporates an understanding of children as actively contributing to their social world (James 2001, p. 246). Although children are in an age category where particular expectations and values are ascribed, through ethnographic work, the recognition of children as participating and sharing in the cultural space of ‘childhood’ has emerged (James 2001, p. 246). James (2001, p. 247) states that ethnography ‘facilitates the desire to engage with children’s own views and ideas [being] rendered accessible to adults as well as to other children’. Through ethnography, researchers can explore many aspects of children’s lives through the presentation of the children’s own perspectives (James 2001, p. 250).

There has been a shift, facilitated by ethnography researching children's lives, from adult-focused concern with child socialisation, to a more child-centred view of children as social actors (James 2001, p. 247). Ethnography has been critical to the development of a perspective on childhood that incorporates a view of children as social actors who take an active part in shaping the form that their own childhoods take (James 2001, p. 249). Ethnography has achieved a view of children as active participants in, rather than their simply subject to, these processes (James 2001, p. 250). Ethnographic work with children has enabled 'the voices of those who would otherwise be silent to be heard' (James 2001, p. 255). Research of this kind has seen children come to be regarded as social actors whose views and perspectives should be considered (James 2001, p. 255).

Virtual ethnography

Ethnography has extended to the online world through the observation techniques of digital or virtual ethnography (Hine 2000; Markham 2005). Ethnographers have long entered the lives of their participants to gain an understanding of how people 'experience, perceive, create, and navigate the social world' (Hallett & Barber 2014, p. 307). Hallett and Barber (2014, p. 306) argue that studying people in their 'natural habitat' now includes their 'online habitat'. There is a need for researchers to integrate data from online spaces into 'traditional' ethnographic research (Hallett & Barber 2014, p. 306). Online data is now an essential component of understanding social life (Hallett & Barber 2014, p. 325), and in contemporary research, excluding an online component has become nearly impossible (Hallett & Barber 2014, p. 326).

Gobo (2008) raises theoretical and methodological criticisms of virtual ethnography. Gobo (2008, p. 110) questions whether cultures can be sufficiently understood through simple textual analysis, in which the ethnographer observes and analyses texts online without meeting the writer and observing the context in which the texts are written. Gobo (2008, p. 110) also points to the danger of virtual ethnography resembling conversation analysis, discourse analysis or textual analysis. However, other academics stress the positives and benefits of conducting virtual ethnography. Liamputtong (2013, p. 352), for example, states that 'online communication is increasingly seen as an excellent source of information'. Online communication can exist in both the semi-private and public domains, and can be

synchronous and asynchronous (Liamputtong 2013, p. 353). Ballantyne, Lowe and Beddoe (2017, p. 24) are of the view that studies of online interactions in social media spaces yield ‘excellent empirical data, allowing researchers to observe and trace relationships over time and analyze the actual content of communications’. Digital ethnography will remain an ‘exciting field of enquiry that is continually shifting […] because of its emphasis on reflexivity and openness’ (Gyor 2017, p. 138). Liamputtong (2013, p. 378) predicts that the use of online methodologies in qualitative research is likely to increase in popularity, and that researchers should embrace this new way of researching.

Netnography

This research took the form of an ethnographic study conducted online. As our social worlds extend online, contemporary social researchers must follow in their research methods. This new frontier in research methods is called netnography, which Kozinets (2010, p. 1) defines as ‘a specialized form of ethnography adapted to the unique computer-mediated contingencies of today’s social worlds’. Netnography is participant-observation research based in online fieldwork (Kozinets 2010, p. 60). This research used Facebook as the field site and was a ‘pure netnography’ (Kozinets 2010, p. 65): one that is solely conducted using data generated from online interactions. Given the research focus of young people and risk on social media, a pure netnography was entirely appropriate.

Netnography, a new trend in conducting qualitative research online, describes the conduct of computer-mediated ethnography (Kozinets 2010, p. 17). Kozinets (2010, p. 42) refers to netnography as being the younger sibling of ethnography. The core of netnography, according to Kozinets (2010, p. 74), is a participatory approach to studying online communications. Kozinets (2010, p. 75) argues that such an approach provides the opportunity to experience embedded cultural understanding. Participation in a netnographic study should be active and visible to community members (Kozinets 2010, p. 96). Benefits of analysing existing online communications and conversations include its being both naturalistic and unobtrusive in method (Kozinets 2010, p. 56). Garcia, Standlee, Bechkoff and Cui (2009, p. 57) argue that practically all ethnographies of contemporary society should include technologically mediated communication, behaviour, or artifacts in the setting for the research.

At its most basic, an interview is a conversation (Kozinets 2010, p. 45). Kozinets (2010, p. 46) writes that depth interviewing is usually the method of choice when focusing on 'nuanced cultural understandings of online social groups'. Liamputtong (2009, p. 251) reflects that online communication is increasingly seen as an excellent source of information. Within social science research, there are two distinct types of online communication to consider: synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous communication occurs in real time, whereas asynchronous communication is an exchange of messages 'which are electronically transmitted to recipients who can read, reply, print, forward or file them at their leisure' (Mann & Stewart 2000, p. 2).

Kozinets (2010, p. 68) highlights four critical differences between face-to-face ethnography and the online context: alteration, anonymity, accessibility, and archiving. Alteration means that the nature of the interaction is altered by the nature of the technological medium used. There exists a so-called 'technological mediation' of online interaction (Kozinets 2010, p. 68). However, researchers have often dealt with 'mediated' communications, such as letters, public documents, telephone interviews, etc. Online communications open multiple possibilities, yet can also deprive (Kozinets 2010, p. 69). Time lag is a factor to contend with in synchronous communication methods such as chat programs. In asynchronous communication methods such as the bulletin board, there is more opportunity to 'engage in strategic control over information and self-presentation' (Kozinets 2010, p. 69). The world of online communication contains norms, codes and abbreviations that are vital to social relations online. After some time, such linguistic and technical conventions become second nature, and knowledge of such conventions can be highly valuable to the netnographer.

Online research methods often provide anonymity. Kozinets (2010, p. 70) writes that 'anonymity confers online actors a new sense of identity flexibility'. Within a netnographic study, wide arrays of social interactions are accessible to the researcher. Most applications (web-sites, programs or software packages) through which people communicate online offer open membership. Social media can gather geographically dispersed people almost instantaneously. Online social interactions provide the netnographer with data unlike that which a face-to-face ethnographer would encounter, offering a new level of voyeurism – and exhibitionism (Kozinets 2010, p. 71).

Archiving is the fourth factor which sets netnography apart from other methods. The content of online communications can be easily observed, recorded, and copied. Obtaining a near-

complete record of social interactions is far easier in a netnographic study than in a face-to-face ethnographic project (Kozinets 2010, p. 72).

The research setting

The setting for this research is social media, particularly Facebook. Therefore, I will now discuss social media and its affordances. McLoughlin and Lee (2007, p. 666) explain 'affordance' as a 'can do' statement which does not need to be 'predefined by a particular functionality, and refers to any application that enables a user to undertake tasks in their environment, whether known or unknown to him/her'. McLoughlin and Lee (2007, p. 666) use blogging as an example: 'blogging entails typing and editing posts, which are not affordances, but which enable the affordances of idea sharing and interaction'. Social media is now a common part of many people's lives and is used to engage in social relations. I then present Facebook, which is one of the leading social media sites. Facebook has dominated social media in terms of popularity, and continues to be a space young people inhabit.

Social media and its affordances

The Internet has become a necessity for most people today, and in recent years social media has become a standard means of communication. boyd (2014, p. 6) describes social media as being 'at the heart of contemporary culture'. The term 'social media' includes 'social network sites, video sharing sites, blogging and microblogging platforms, and related tools that allow participants to create and share their own content' (boyd 2014, p. 6). The Internet began as a global computer network, but has gradually evolved into a mass communication platform and a social institution (Bakardjieva 2005, p. 189). Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 241) state that 'we are in the midst of an altogether new communication landscape'.

Social media is having a profound impact on today's society, and is changing and shaping the way we live (Ross 2012, para. 1). We exist in a world that uses technology to share, to communicate, to commune, to socialise, to express and to understand in a way that has never before been possible (Kozinets 2010, p. 2; Ross 2012, para. 2). Because of the rise in global technology, our experience of community has changed, and we are connected to our friends,

family, and strangers in a split second (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010, p. 10; Liamputtong 2009, p. 250). Hjorth and Henrdy (2015, p. 1) explain that contemporary social media compresses and spreads ideas ‘in a more accelerated and data heavy manner’. As Morgan (2009, p. 56) highlights, for some people, social networking can seem daunting, mysterious and complicated, but it is essentially no different from the real-world activities we have engaged in for most of our lives. Similarly, Fabricant (2013, para. 1) states that ‘social networks are not new – humans are fundamentally gregarious and have always organised themselves into groups, forming strong and weak links. It’s the same behavior, just with new tools’.

The evolution of social media has happened with incredible speed, and its rapid uptake by users gives it great power: it is widespread and intense. Ross (2012, para. 1) believes that social media, and how it is used, is evolving faster than anyone could have predicted. Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 242) argue that ‘it is clear that – for better or for worse – social media is very powerful’. Social media sites are now used by individuals, groups, schools and businesses, engaging people of all ages across the globe. Social media has introduced considerable and pervasive changes to communication between individuals, communities and organisations (Kietzmann et al. 2011, p. 250). It has provided a new, boundless space for communication and interaction with others. The widespread reach of social media has made it mainstream in people’s everyday lives. Hjorth and Hendry (2015, p. 1) comment that ‘[r]andom “likes” are interwoven into the rhythms of everyday life’. Being involved in an online community is a regular part of people’s lives (Kozinets 2010, p. 14). As Goncalves, Perra and Vespignani (2011, p. 1) write, ‘the divide between the physical world and online social realities has been blurred by the new possibilities afforded by real-time communication and broadcasting, which appear to greatly enhance our social and cognitive capabilities in establishing and maintaining social relations’.

Social media allows users to create and share information and images and to engage in social networking, and as Close (2014, para. 1) points out: ‘Social media is alive and well in Australia’. It is estimated that 79 per cent of people in Australia now use social media (Sensis 2017, p. 3), and more than half of these access social media more than five times a day (Sensis 2017, p. 4). Technological advances allow greater accessibility to social media, making it available through apps on our mobile phones, as well as on desktop computers. Close (2014) reports that 55 per cent of mobile users use social media apps on their phones.

Social media allows users the opportunity to become the producers of their own content. With the introduction of Web 2.0, users can control the content they produce and react interactively to content produced by other users (Wigand, Wood & Mande 2010, p. 8). As O'Reilly and Battelle (2009, p. 1) state: 'Collective intelligence applications depend on managing, understanding, and responding to massive amounts of user-generated data in real time'. This idea is often understood as 'crowdsourcing', where a large number of people contribute to a collective work whose value far exceeds the individual inputs (O'Reilly & Battelle 2009, p. 2). O'Reilly and Battelle (2009, p. 1) comment on how these collective intelligence applications are no longer being driven solely by human input through keyboards, but also by sensors, with motion and location sensors providing information on where we are, what we are looking at, and how fast we are moving. Therefore, the scale of participation has magnified as the smartphone revolution has moved the Web from our desks to our pockets (O'Reilly & Battelle 2009, p. 1). Wigand, Wood and Mande (2010, p. 3) describe Web 2.0 as a 'participatory medium' and a 'social phenomenon' that encourages interaction and collaborative work. It is a space in which anyone can 'explore, join, build or depart any web community and can create and post content onto the Internet without requiring extensive technical know-how' (Wigand, Wood & Mande 2010, p. 3). Hendry, Robards and Stanford (2017, p. 141) describe the practical control that Facebook users have to 'make, accept, reject, or ignore 'friend' requests', therefore controlling who can and cannot access their profile. In addition to practical control, Facebook users have symbolic control that allows users to shape their profile and their 'presentation of self' (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 142).

Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 243) present 'the honeycomb of social media', which aims to provide a framework of social media building blocks to better understand the functionality of social media. This framework includes seven core elements: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. The identity element represents the extent to which users reveal their identity within the social media environment. The conversations block represents the extent to which users communicate with other users in a social media setting. Many social media sites are designed primarily to facilitate conversations among individuals and groups of people. The element of sharing represents the extent to which users exchange, distribute, and receive content. Presence refers to the extent to which users can know if other users are accessible. This presence element involves knowing where others are in the online and/or offline world, and if they are available. The relationships block represents

the extent to which users can be related to other users. The reputation element of social media is the extent to which users can identify the standing of others, including themselves, in a social media environment. The final element, groups, refers to the extent to which users can form communities and sub-communities.

Social media connects the online and real social worlds, as these spaces 'entail both online and offline interactions and visual/verbal connectivity' (McLoughlin & Lee 2007, p. 665). O'Reilly and Battelle (2009, p. 2) assert that the Web is no longer a collection of static pages or an industry unto itself, but increasingly the Web is the world, in which everyone and everything casts an 'information shadow'. The Web 2.0, and social media, offer new possibilities and applications to users (McLoughlin & Lee 2007, p. 665). Such new possibilities allow new affordances, resulting in a range of positive outcomes for young people. boyd (2014, p. 11) describes four affordances of social media: persistence; visibility; spreadablility; and searchability. Persistence refers to the durability of online expressions and content (boyd 2014, p. 11). On social media, interactions can occur asynchronously, and conversations endure online (boyd 2014, p. 11). Persistence, then, means that those who use social media are often 'on the record' (boyd 2014, p. 11). boyd (2014, p. 11) highlights the affordance of visibility on social media. Through social media, people are able to share with 'broad audiences and access content from greater distances' (boyd 2014, p. 11). Social media also affords spreadability: the ease with which content can be shared (boyd 2014, p. 11). Social media explicitly and implicitly encourages the spreading of information (boyd 2014, p. 12). Searchability is the fourth affordance of social media that boyd (2014, p. 11) highlights. This affordance describes how social media provides the ability to find content (boyd 2014, p. 11). Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 10) describe various opportunities that young people are afforded by being online, including: access to global information; access to advice; exchanging interests; having shared experiences with others; and expressing identity.

The Internet affords users relatively easy access to vast amounts of information through a range of different mechanisms (Conole & Dyke 2004, p. 116). Connections between friends, family, children and strangers are achieved in split seconds because of the rise of global technology (Liamputtong 2013, p. 351). On the Internet, the speed at which information can be exchanged has led to a shift in user expectations about response times to requests from other users (Conole & Dyke 2004, p. 120). As O'Reilly and Battelle (2009, p. 9) state: 'Real-time search encourages real-time response'. Social media sites such as Facebook, through

their status updates, have added a new data source to the Web: real-time indications of what is on our collective mind (O'Reilly & Battelle 2009, p. 9). Smartphones offer young people near-constant access to friends' online postings on social media (Lenhart et al. 2015, p. 54). Young people can use their mobiles to access social media and connect with friends frequently and immediately. Those young people who use smartphones to access social media are more likely to report feeling 'a lot' more connected to their friends' lives than those who do not use smartphones (Lenhart et al. 2015, p. 54). Facebook users can move between synchronous immediacy and asynchronous methods of communication (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 143). While Facebook affords immediacy, it also affords the ability to withdraw from that immediacy (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 143).

There is a vast array of active social media sites (see Figure 1, below) which all target different groups of people, such as Facebook, Google+, MySpace, and Twitter. Twitter is reported to have around 1.3 million users in Australia alone (The Works 2014). LinkedIn, in contrast, is branded as a social networking site for professionals. As Schebesta (2013, paras. 4–6) claims, it 'invites you to share and connect with others', 'can help you organise your life', and 'leads to being a better leader'. Family HQ is a site developed by an Australian couple that allows members to connect by sharing photos and videos, and to communicate through live messages, instant chats and a family message board. There is a plethora of media sharing sites, including Instagram, Pinterest, Youtube, Flickr, 9gag, Vine, and Vimeo. Live-streaming video apps are available, including Houseparty, YouNow and live.ly. Free texting apps include GroupMe, Kik Messenger, and Whatsapp. Self-destructing message apps are also available, such as Snapchat, where a time limit is set on images and videos that are sent before they disappear. Another app called Whisper is designed for users to post self-confessions anonymously through images and text, and allows users to chat directly to others. Social media has also expanded to include matchmaking apps such as Tinder and MeetMe. The way in which we consume content has changed through social media sites such as Beamly (a social network for TV), Spotify (a social music platform), and Musical.ly (a social platform for short music videos). As Ross (2012, para. 5) states, 'the days of listening and viewing as a private activity will soon be behind us'. For younger social media users, options include Club Penguin, Scuttle Pad, Giant Hello, and yoursphere. In addition to this are a variety of gaming sites such as Friendster, which allows for communication between users and facilitates social networking. There are many more social media sites than those listed here, and no doubt more will continue to emerge and evolve.

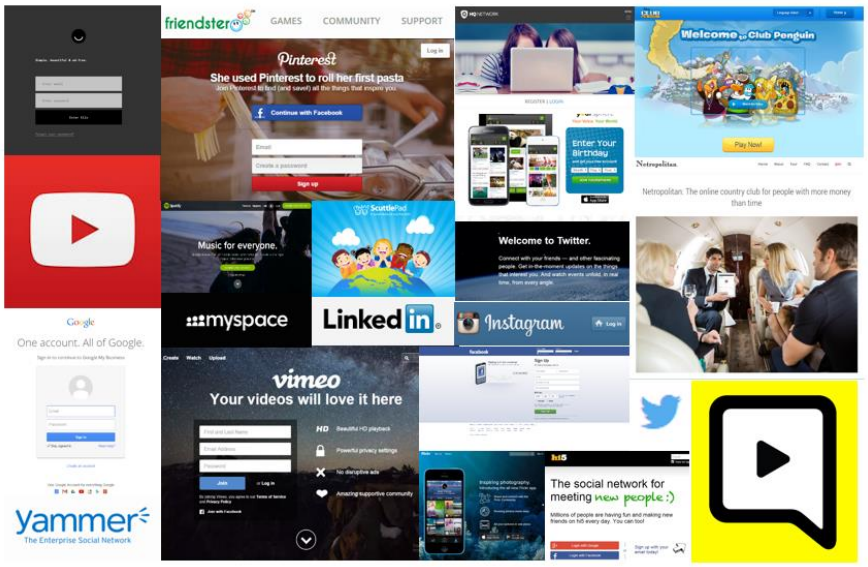


Figure 1: Social media

Facebook

Facebook was chosen as the setting for this research, and online methods were used for data collection. Facebook is one of the leading social networking sites, and is ever-increasing in its reach. Facebook has experienced incredible popularity and growth worldwide. Considering its popularity, especially regarding young people's use, Facebook is the ideal source of data on which to focus.

Facebook (see Figure 2, below) seems to increasingly encompass every part of our lives, and ever more individuals and businesses are embracing it as a means of communication. Facebook is a part of life for a vast number of people around the world. Since its conception in 2004, Facebook has risen to be one of the leading social networking services, reporting 1.52 billion daily active users on average for December 2018 and 2.32 billion monthly active users as of December 2018 (Facebook 2019a). Recent Australian statistics show that Facebook is the number one social media platform being used in Australia, with 15 million monthly active users, 60 per cent of the country are active Facebook users, and 50 per cent of Australians are logging in every day (Cowling 2018, para. 1). In recent research comparing social media platforms (Sensis 2017, p. 17), Facebook was found to be used by 94 per cent of social media users.

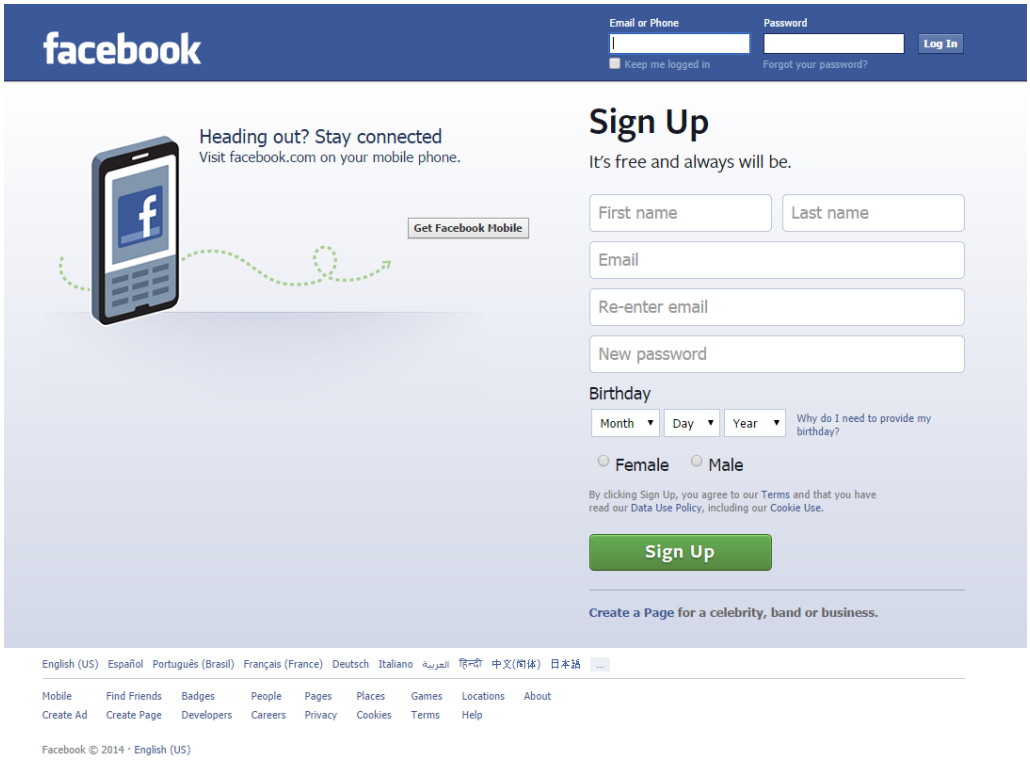


Figure 2: Facebook front page

According to Facebook (2019a), its mission is to 'give people the power to build community and bring the world closer together'. Facebook allows users to create their own profile page, connect with others' profile pages or groups, and engage in communication and conversation. Engagement with Facebook can be quite passive, for example through reading others' posts, searching for new friends or groups, and scanning photos on display. It can also be more active, through making status updates, contacting friends, or uploading videos or photos. Mui and Whoriskey (2010, para. 3) describe Facebook as evolving into 'a universe unto itself, one where users can watch videos, solicit restaurant recommendations and play games surrounded (at least virtually) by friends and family'. As Facebook (2019a) puts it: 'People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them'. Facebook has created a social change that has profoundly altered how people get news and interact with one another – and even the definition of the word 'friend' (Mui & Whoriskey 2010, para. 2). Studies have described the move to Facebook by online users as being related to 'growing up', or to stories of transition for young people (Robards 2012, p. 385).

Sampling and recruitment

Sampling criteria

To be eligible to participate in this research there were three requirements. First, participants needed to be young people identified to be in their 'teenage' years, aged 15 to 18, second, the young person needed to be on Facebook to allow for a connection to be made with the researcher, and third, that the young person reside within Australia.

This research incorporated two phases of involvement with participants. Stage One was the creation of a Facebook research page which young people could connect to. This connection allowed me to view each participants' Facebook profile page. There was no upper limit placed on the number of young people able to connect with the research page. The research page was open and accessible to participants until the conclusion of the research. Stage Two involved a subset of the initial participant group. Young people were invited to engage in an online interview through Facebook. Qualitative researchers seek to focus on experiences, eliciting rich data, and therefore they tend to use smaller sample groups (Alston & Bowles 2003). The use of small numbers of individuals allows them to provide rich details of their experiences, and therefore produces an in-depth understanding of the data (Liamputtong 2013, p. 14). As Liamputtong (2013, p. 19) asserts, the focus of the qualitative researcher is on quality not quantity. The production of rich data was a desired outcome of this research; therefore, a smaller sample group in Stage Two allowed me to obtain meaningful detail.

Recruitment

Recruitment for the study began after ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Tasmania. Two strategies were used to attract research participants to be involved in Stage One: a Facebook advertisement, and the facilitation of information sessions.

Recruitment of young people was initially conducted online through Facebook over a period of seven months. The advertisements targeted people within the age range of 15 to 18 who lived in Australia. Settings within Facebook Ads allowed this specific targeting. Pages on Facebook typically display advertisements on the right-hand side. These advertisements contain text and an image, and clicking on this information leads users directly to more

information. Figure 3, below, shows an example of how a participant would see the advertisement on their Facebook news feed.

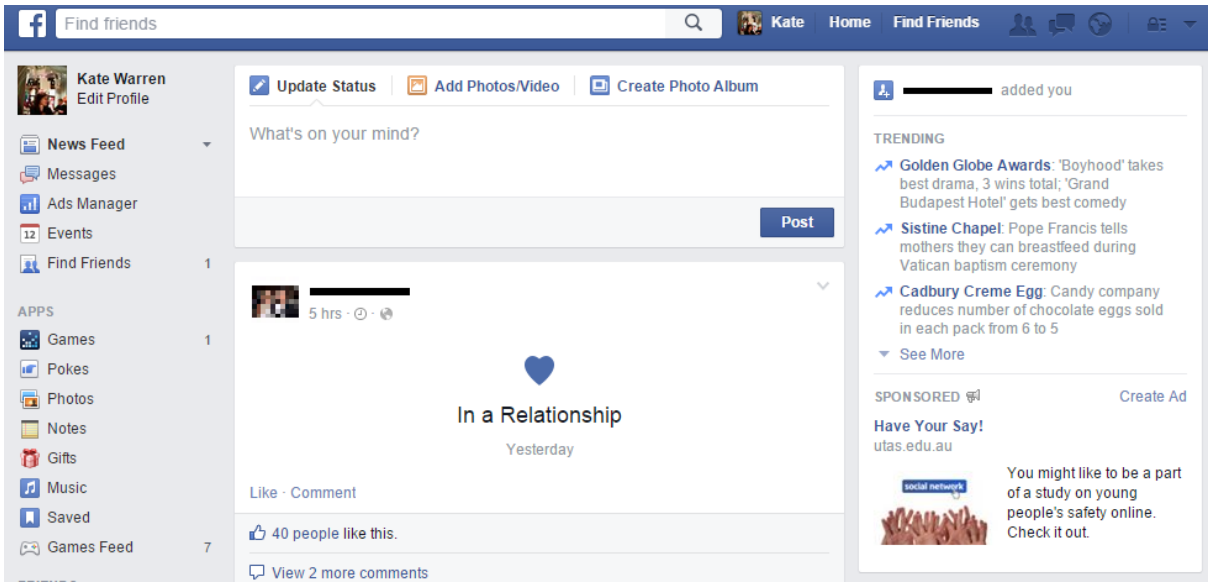


Figure 3: In-situ example of the Facebook advertisement (bottom right-hand corner)

The recruitment ad was active on Facebook over a period of seven months, and during this time a total of 6,771 clicks were recorded, each of which would take the potential participant to a University page detailing the project. Despite the large number of clicks, this resulted in a total of 73 participants joining the project. There was also the possibility of this recruitment snowballing through young people's networks. As each participant connected with the research page, through adding me as friend, a notification was automatically displayed on their Facebook wall (see Figure 4, below) which was visible to their friends. This notification had the potential to create curiosity in their friends, leading them to click on my name and to then consider the project and possibly choose to participate.

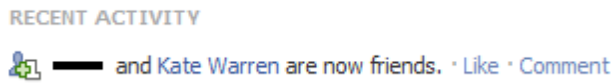


Figure 4: Notification on a participant's wall that they had added me as a friend

Additionally, two participants, advertised the research on their Facebook pages without any direction from me. Abby promoted the research through a post and Jess shared a link to the research to encourage her Facebook friends to become involved (see Figure 5, below).

Figure 5:Wall post by a participant advertising the research

In addition to the Facebook advertisement, I also recruited participants through local schools and youth organisations. I presented information sessions about the research at local schools on the North-West coast of Tasmania. Letters were sent and contact made with principals of schools to introduce the research and to request that they facilitate information sessions. In addition to the information sessions, I also requested the display of posters and advertisements (see Figure 6, below) in school/service organisation newsletters. Facilitating information sessions in schools provided me an opportunity to speak with young people face-to-face about the project and to generate some conversation about it. Youth organisations helped to promote the research through their networks, passing on the information to young people. Young people were provided with information on the research, and the Internet link they needed to access to become involved. It was stressed that the decision to be involved was completely voluntary. This recruitment method combated one disadvantage that the recruitment advertisement on Facebook had, which is that Facebook's ad settings required that an advertisement must link to a webpage outside Facebook. This meant that the advertisement linked to the research information on the University of Tasmania website, from which potential participants then had to link back to the Facebook research page. This process of clicking through the links could have deterred potential participants. Both the information sessions and the sharing of information through youth organisation networks, on the other hand, connected young people directly to the research page within Facebook. In addition to this, a media release was provided on the University website detailing all aspects of the project and providing further promotion.

Figure 6: Recruitment posters given to schools and youth organisation networks

The participants for Stage Two were recruited from the sample who participated in Stage One. An open invitation (see Figure 7, below) was made through the research page on Facebook, inviting young people to participate in online interviews. After the initial open invitation, further invitations to engage in online interviews (for example, see Figure 8, below) were posted onto the research profile page during Stage Two data collection. I accepted all respondents to this invitation, a total of 16 people.

Figure 7: Open invitation to participants to engage in an online interview

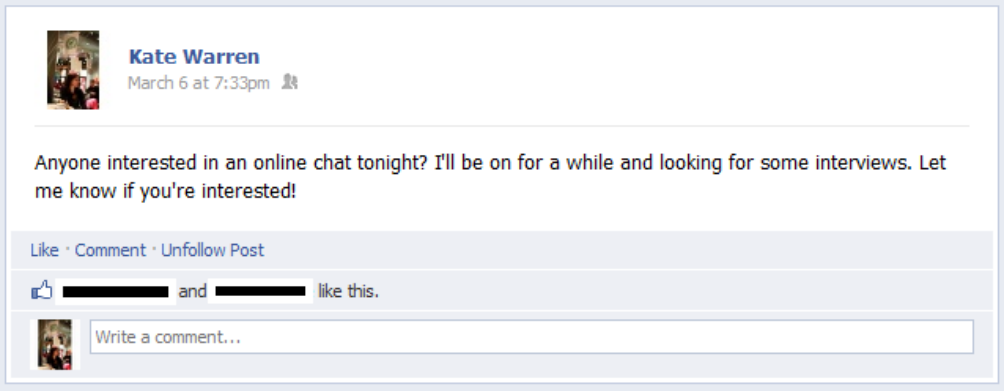


Figure 8: Subsequent invitation posted on the research Facebook page

Data collection

Hamman (2004, p. 296) states that 'there are certain advantages to interviewing people in their own environment', and Jones (1999, p. 13) suggests that an 'obvious step is to describe and interpret on-line communication'. Following this trend, the setting and mode of correspondence with participants and data collection were congruent with the research topic. All correspondence with participants was online, through the Internet, via Facebook and email.

Data collection in this research was done by two means. Firstly, through the creation of a research profile and collection of online textual data, and secondly, through online interviews. This two-method approach allowed for triangulation of the data. Brewer (2000, p. 75) states that rarely is one method of data collection used without others. Fetterman (2010, p. 94) describes triangulation as at the heart of ethnographic validity, and says that it improves the quality of data and the accuracy of ethnographic findings (Fetterman 2010, p. 96). Likewise, Liamputtong (2009, p. 26) declares that triangulation is the most powerful means of strengthening credibility in qualitative studies. Also in favour of triangulation, Fontana and Frey (2005, p. 722) highlight that this technique betters the chances of gaining understanding of how people construct their lives and the stories they tell about them. Using multiple methods enhances the credibility of the data collected, the associated analyses conducted, and the resulting assertions made (Burton & Steane 2004, p. 162).

Methodological triangulation, as used in this research, means that several methods are used in data collection (Liamputtong 2013, p. 30). Liamputtong (2013, p. 31) highlights that a

negative of methodological triangulation is that it can increase the data collection time, and it can also be difficult and problematic. However, if more than one method produces consistent findings, the research can claim a higher level of internal validity (Liamputtong 2013, p. 31). In this research, the two data collection methods can be seen to complement one another, and as providing a more complete understanding of the context.

Stage One: Creation of a research profile and collection of online textual data

A Facebook profile was created for the research. Once recruited, young people were invited to connect with the research profile. Acceptance of the link between myself and the participant (i.e., becoming 'friends' on Facebook) was deemed to represent consent to participating in the research. The research profile page provided access to all information regarding the research. Links to information about the research on the University website were provided (see Figure 9, below). Information provided to participants on the Facebook profile page in the 'Notes' section included:

- Information on becoming a 'friend' of the research page (see Appendix 1),
- Consenting to becoming a 'friend' of the research page (see Appendix 2),
- Information on email interviews (see Appendix 3),
- Consenting to email interviews on Facebook (see Appendix 4),
- Looking after yourself (see Appendix 5), and
- Online support (see Appendix 6).

This information was also provided on the University website, along with two additional pages of information: 'Information on the research' (see Appendix 7) and 'Names of investigators' (see Appendix 8).

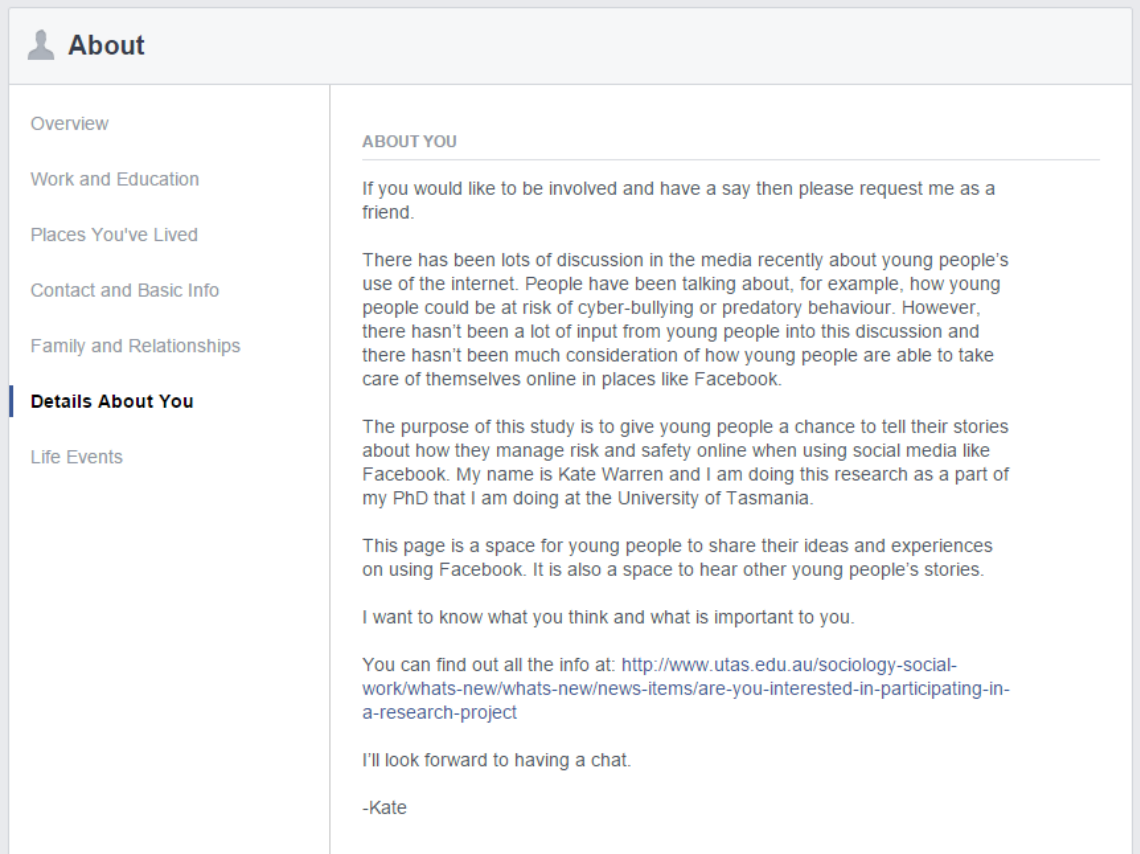
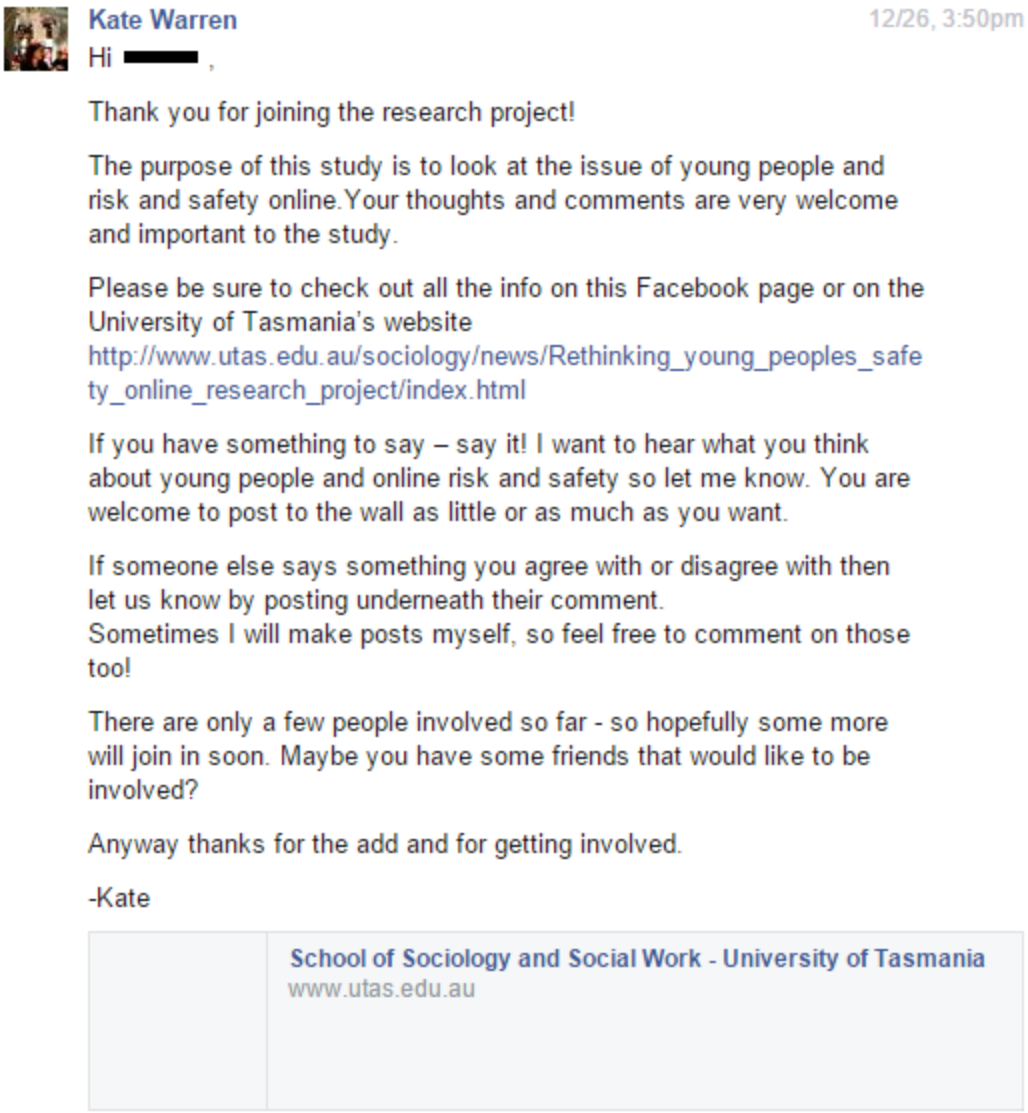


Figure 9: Information presented on the Facebook page with links to the University

As young people connected with the research, they were able to view the research profile page (see Figure 10, below), and a welcome note (see Figure 11, below) was sent to them with a reminder to read the information provided on the profile page or University website so that they would be well informed on what was involved.

Figure 10: An example view of the research profile page



Kate Warren 12/26, 3:50pm

Hi [redacted],

Thank you for joining the research project!

The purpose of this study is to look at the issue of young people and risk and safety online.Your thoughts and comments are very welcome and important to the study.

Please be sure to check out all the info on this Facebook page or on the University of Tasmania's website http://www.utas.edu.au/sociology/news/Rethinking_young_peoples_safety_online_research_project/index.html

If you have something to say – say it! I want to hear what you think about young people and online risk and safety so let me know. You are welcome to post to the wall as little or as much as you want.

If someone else says something you agree with or disagree with then let us know by posting underneath their comment.
Sometimes I will make posts myself, so feel free to comment on those too!

There are only a few people involved so far - so hopefully some more will join in soon. Maybe you have some friends that would like to be involved?

Anyway thanks for the add and for getting involved.

-Kate

School of Sociology and Social Work - University of Tasmania
www.utas.edu.au

Figure 11: Welcome note sent to participants when they joined the research

Stage One of data collection included textual analyses of online information sources. Individual profile pages of participants (see Figure 12, below) were explored and data was collected. All data was collected through screenshots of the visible page. This allowed for collection of both textual and visual data, and for a record to be kept of the timelines in which data was uploaded by participants. I will now describe in detail the process of collecting data from participants' profiles.

Figure 12: Example of the timeline on a participant profile page

As participants connected with the research, an individual computer folder was created for each, resulting in a total of 73 folders. Initially, each participant's Facebook profile was viewed and a screenshot taken before the friend request was accepted. These screenshots were saved to each persons' folder, allowing information on what was accessible to a non-friend to be recorded. Participants' profiles were then screened to confirm that the participant

appeared to be aged 15 to 18 and to reside in Australia. Pages were also viewed to gain an initial insight into each participant's Facebook identity, their presence online, and the connections and communications they had with others.

Screenshots were taken on the same day of accepting the participant as a friend. All sections of participants' profiles that were available on Facebook were screenshotted, including the 'about' page, photo albums, friend list, likes, and maps. Once the data within these Facebook structures had been collected, focus turned to the participant's Facebook wall. The participants' walls are spaces on which people post status updates, receive comments from friends, and upload photos. This was also a space which detailed participants' actions on Facebook, such as connecting with new friends, updating relationship statuses, joining groups, and liking pages. This space essentially detailed most young people's actions and communications on Facebook.

Liamputtong (2013, p. 166) describes how ethnographers are required to be close to the everyday experience and activities of participants, and how this can be achieved through participant observation. Participant observation is crucial to effective fieldwork in ethnographic research, and combines participation in the lives of participants with maintenance of a professional distance, allowing both sufficient observation and the recording of data (Fetterman 2010, p. 37). Following the initial methods of data collection described above, participant observation was done regularly. Screenshots were taken of all participants' recent activity and communications. As the number of participants increased, the Facebook feed was used to monitor their activity. This allowed me to survey all participants' activity and communications without needing to visit each participant's profile individually in the first instance. Both synchronous and asynchronous data were able to be collected through participant observation. I observed young people's online behaviour as a 'Facebook friend', allowing for an authentic experience. Through this engagement with the participants and data, I was able to achieve immersion in the field. As Liamputtong (2013, p. 166) explains, ethnographers must fully immerse themselves in the culture, which involves being with people and learning how people behave, how they respond to situations, and what is meaningful to them. Existing alongside the participants on Facebook allowed me to experience things as a participant would in the context.

As textual or visual data was presented on the Facebook feed, it was collected. The screenshots were saved to each participant's folder, and the date of viewing was recorded.

Through this method, data was collected on a total of 76 days. The collection occurred between 28 November 2011 and on 5 July 2012. This equated to just over seven months of contact with participants during data collection. Ethnographers typically spend six months to two years or longer in the field (Liamputtong 2013, p. 164). Liamputtong (2013, p. 29) asserts that the longer the time spent in the field, the more accurate the collected data . There is also a greater likelihood of learning about sensitive issues, which is not achievable in a shorter timeframe (Liamputtong 2013, p. 165). The most data was collected between February and May. This was due to the numbers of participants having increased by this time. This resulted in a collection of 4,041 individual screenshots. The number of posts within each screenshot varied, making the total number of posts from young people difficult to calculate – the posts would need to be manually counted. The number of screenshots for each participant varied according to the length of their connection with the research and the amount of activity that was seen on their profile. The participant with the fewest screenshots had eight, while the most was 273. These differences could be attributed to the amount of activity seen on the participants' pages and to the length of connection during the data collection period. The participant with the highest number of screenshots was one of the first to join the research, remained connected throughout the entire data collection period, and had a highly active profile. The mean number of screenshots per participant was 55.

This unobtrusive ethnographic method of collecting data through screenshots of Facebook pages was continued for each participant until they withdrew from the research by unfriending me. Once a participant had ended the connection, I screenshotted the information viewable by a non-friend in the same way as I had prior to the initial connection. No further information was collected from these participants. Data collection continued from the profiles of young people that remained connected to the research until the point of saturation was reached. Saturation is the point at which no new data is being uncovered. Of the 73 participants, 44 opted to 'unfriend' me at some stage of the research. The majority of these deletions occurred after the data collection stage, resulting in 29 participants maintaining our connection through to the conclusion of the research when the research page was shut down.

Stage Two: Online interviews

As Liamputtong (2013, p. 51) states, conversation is a ‘fundamental means of interaction among individuals in society’. To be able to explore how people see their world, we need to talk with those people (Liamputtong 2013, p. 51). The young people involved in the online interviews were a subset of the group in Stage One. An open request was made through the research page inviting young people to contact me if they wished to engage in an online interview. I completed online interviews with all participants who wished to do so, resulting in 16 interviews. As noted by Travers (2014, p. 232) it is possible to ‘obtain interesting and valuable research findings through conducting only a few interviews’. These interviews were conducted during data collection for Stage One. Liamputtong (2013, p. 55) explains that within qualitative research, interview methods are often used in ethnography. Fetterman (2010, p. 40) argues that interviewing is the ethnographer’s most important data gathering technique, because interviews explain and put into a larger context what is seen and experienced by the researcher. Interviews help to classify and organise the understandings of an individual’s perception of reality (Fetterman 1989, p. 50).

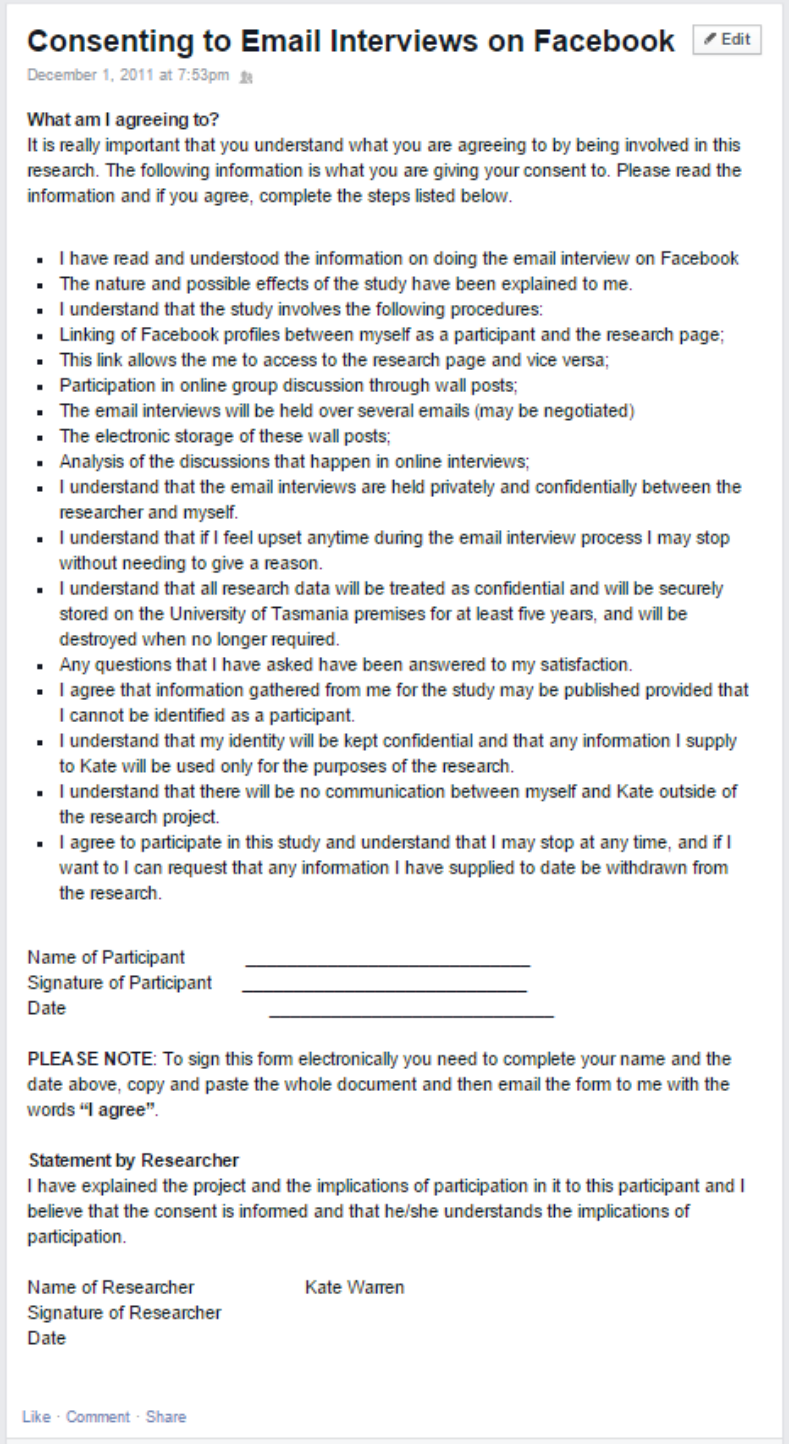
The interviews were conducted through the email function within Facebook. These interviews were conducted solely between me and each individual participant. Liamputtong (2013, p. 51) describes interviews as ‘special conversations’ within social research. Similarly, Burgess (1982, p. 102) refers to interviews as ‘conversations with a purpose’. An interview schedule was used, but the interviews were semi-structured, allowing the participant to change and/or direct the flow of conversation.

Most participants completed the interview process on a single occasion, but four chose to engage in conversation on two occasions. The length of each interview varied, depending on the level of engagement of each individual and the response time. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to three hours in length, and were completed at a time convenient for the young person. The participants were in full control of the time they spent sharing through the interviews:

- They initiated the contact, expressing their desire to do an interview,
- They chose the day and time,
- It was explained to participants at the beginning of each interview that they could chat for as little or as long as they wished, and could stop at any time,

- Checks were provided at regular intervals to allow the participant to choose to continue or stop conversing, and
- They decided whether to communicate on a subsequent occasion.

At the beginning of the interview process, participants were invited to read the information on consenting to the online interviews (see Figure 13, below), and were given the direct link to this information. Electronic consent forms were received prior to the interviews commencing. The interview process was designed to be friendly and casual, with participants being encouraged to share their own experiences. A schedule of questions was used in each interview, but questions were added, modified, or omitted depending on the content of individual responses. This reflects a postmodern interview approach in which the conversation switches between researcher and participant to achieve understanding (Liamputtong 2013, p. 53).



Consenting to Email Interviews on Facebook Edit

December 1, 2011 at 7:53pm

What am I agreeing to?
It is really important that you understand what you are agreeing to by being involved in this research. The following information is what you are giving your consent to. Please read the information and if you agree, complete the steps listed below.

- I have read and understood the information on doing the email interview on Facebook
- The nature and possible effects of the study have been explained to me.
- I understand that the study involves the following procedures:
- Linking of Facebook profiles between myself as a participant and the research page;
- This link allows the me to access to the research page and vice versa;
- Participation in online group discussion through wall posts;
- The email interviews will be held over several emails (may be negotiated)
- The electronic storage of these wall posts;
- Analysis of the discussions that happen in online interviews;
- I understand that the email interviews are held privately and confidentially between the researcher and myself.
- I understand that if I feel upset anytime during the email interview process I may stop without needing to give a reason.
- I understand that all research data will be treated as confidential and will be securely stored on the University of Tasmania premises for at least five years, and will be destroyed when no longer required.
- Any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I agree that information gathered from me for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a participant.
- I understand that my identity will be kept confidential and that any information I supply to Kate will be used only for the purposes of the research.
- I understand that there will be no communication between myself and Kate outside of the research project.
- I agree to participate in this study and understand that I may stop at any time, and if I want to I can request that any information I have supplied to date be withdrawn from the research.

Name of Participant _____
Signature of Participant _____
Date _____

PLEASE NOTE: To sign this form electronically you need to complete your name and the date above, copy and paste the whole document and then email the form to me with the words **"I agree"**.

Statement by Researcher
I have explained the project and the implications of participation in it to this participant and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of Researcher Kate Warren
Signature of Researcher
Date

Like · Comment · Share

Figure 13: Information provided to participants at the beginning of an online interview

Liamputtong (2013, p. 56) describes different types of questions that may be used within interviews, including opening questions, follow-up questions, probing questions, specifying questions, direct questions, indirect questions, structuring questions, interpreting questions, and silence. All these types of question were used while conducting interviews, except for silence, due to the online context and the speed at which a response was required.

Opening questions allow participants to share at great length, to choose which parts they wish to emphasise, and to decide where they would like to start (Liamputtong 2013, pp. 56–57). For example: ‘Why did you decide to be a part of the research?’. Follow-up questions allow participants to elaborate on their responses (Liamputtong 2013, p. 57). For example: ‘So you think your mum doesn’t have a real sense of what the internet is like because she didn’t grow up with it?’ To prompt further discussion with participants, probing questions are used (Liamputtong 2013, p. 57), such as: ‘So when these things like fighting over statuses happen, what do people do about it?’ To obtain more specific responses, researchers may follow up by asking specific questions (Liamputtong 2013, p. 57), such as: ‘Do you have any other techniques/tricks for keeping yourself safe or keeping others safe?’ Direct questions are used to clarify issues or any ambiguity (Liamputtong 2013, p. 57). For example: ‘Can you tell me more about what you mean by teenage drama?’ Indirect questions are a way of eliciting participants’ beliefs through questioning, for example stating other people’s beliefs and then confirming if the participants agrees with them (Liamputtong 2013, p. 57). For example: ‘How do you think your parent or teacher might describe Facebook?’ Structuring questions help to move the conversation onto a new line of questioning (Liamputtong 2013, p. 58); ‘You told me what you liked about Facebook, what is it that you dislike about Facebook?’ By rephrasing participants’ responses, researchers can clarify their meanings, which then assists in interpreting what the participants have shared (Liamputtong 2013, p. 58). For example, ‘So, you sound like you have some positive things to say about Facebook, but also some negatives…’ Prompts were also used throughout the interviews to elicit detail, clarify meanings, and maintain conversational flow.

Due to interviews being conducted online through text, transcribing of interviews was unnecessary. Raw data produced on Facebook was copied into a Word document. Each participant was given an alias and all identifying information was removed. These electronic documents became the interview transcripts.

Data analysis and interpretation

In this research, two data sets, in line with the two stages of data collection, were created and analysed. Thematic analysis commenced after all data had been gathered from participants' Facebook pages and all interviews had been completed. Marvasti (2004, p. 88) states that qualitative data analysis should be viewed as 'a dynamic and inventive process'.

Boyatzis (1998, p. 1) describes thematic analysis as 'a way of seeing'. This type of analysis identifies 'themes that emerge from within the data' (Willis 2014, p. 324). Categories into which themes are sorted are 'induced' from the data (Ezzy 2003, p. 88). The analysis aimed to locate themes or patterns within the data sets and to identify differences between participants. Fetterman (1989, p. 92) highlights that patterns are a form of ethnographic reliability. The thematic analysis was inductive and data-driven (Boyatzis 1998, p. 29).

Steps were taken in the data analysis stage to make sense of the qualitative data gained from the two stages of data collection. Initially, interview data and online textual data were considered separately, however a similar process of coding and thematic analysis was conducted on both. Coding is an important first part of qualitative analysis (Willis 2014, p. 324). According to Ezzy (2003, p. 94), coding is 'the process of disassembling and reassembling the data'. Thematic analysis of the data involved coding like that done in grounded theory. As Liamputtong (2013, p. 250) says, coding plays a major part in thematic analysis, and initial and axial coding are required to 'deconstruct data, put them into codes, and find links between them'.

Initial coding or 'open codes' involves the simple naming of categories as they appear in the data (Brewer 2000, p. 153). This classification strategy involves applying a similarity/dissimilarity criterion to the data (Gobo 2008, p. 234). Axial coding involves identifying those categories that relate to the others in the data (Brewer 2000, p. 153). Axial coding, then, allows for the connection of different codes identified in the initial coding process (Liamputtong 2013, p. 250). This process involves data being grouped into codes which represent the categories in the findings, and these codes are then examined, leading to further refinement and revision (Brewer 2000, p. 152). At this stage, the concepts from the initial coding phase are reassembled into a new pattern to construct a coherent framework (Gobo 2008, p. 234). Connections between the data emerge during the process of searching for regularities and variations in the data and between the categories used to code them

(Brewer 2000, p. 114). Gobo (2008, p. 235) explains the third phase of coding, selective coding, where the researcher checks the hypotheses formulated and anchors them to theory. This stage is a higher level of analysis than the previous two, and in practice, the three phases of analysis presented above interweave and may be repeated (Gobo 2008, p. 235).

In this study, data analysis was conducted manually. Initially, interview transcripts were read thoroughly and repeatedly. This reading and re-reading was done in order to code the data (Brewer 2000, p. 110). The transcripts were firstly read through without making any notes. The transcripts were then read through again and significant observations and potential categories were noted. Key words and initial themes were recorded. The same process was conducted on the observational data. The themes were reviewed to uncover similarities and overlaps. As Brewer (2000, p. 113) describes, analysis, for ethnographers, 'requires searching for the patterns within the data and explaining the relationships between segments of the data'. Following this review, the themes derived from both interviews and observational data were revised, then defined and named.

This process involved categorisation and subjective evaluation. Coding resulted in the generation of 10 themes and 47 sub-themes. From these free-ranging themes, the data was selectively coded, organised, and ordered into themes relating to the three major components of the study: young people's understanding of risk and safety on Facebook; young people protecting themselves online; and young people protecting others online. Further analysis of the data involved restricting the themes and sub themes, and resulted in three major categories: friendships on Facebook; well-being on Facebook; and privacy and safety on Facebook.

Once these themes and sub-themes had been established, an additional data analysis method was used. Here, the data was analysed according to cohorts of age, gender and sexuality. A table of participant statistics was created using information provided by participants from their profile pages. The findings were then re-read, marking statistics of age, gender and sexuality against the themes. The findings were re-read, noting if clusters of participants were prominent in each theme and sub-theme. For example, this analysis showed that expressive posts were made largely by females and by males who identified as gay or bisexual. In another example, self-harm was spoken about mostly by 15- and 16-year-old females. Also noted was whether the topic of conversation was centred on particular cohorts. For example,

when talking about photo sharing and intimate photos, females were the subject of judgement.

The data analysis process continued from this point with a direct focus on risk. The findings, which at this stage had been organised into three chapters, were re-examined. Considerations were made about how young people considered risk and which practices observed and spoken about by participants constituted real risks. From this analysis, data was separated into that dealing with risks on Facebook and that showing young people recognising and responding to risks. The remainder of the data reflected more positive accounts of young people's experiences online.

Data analysis was complex for this research, and the data was re-analysed multiple times. The coding process through which themes emerged ended at the point of saturation. Saturation, as Brewer (2000, p. 153) explains, occurs when no additional data is found that develops the properties of codes or categories. At this point, the data analysis can be taken no further (Brewer 2000, p. 153). This ordering of the data led to the discovery of meaning-making for the research. This meaning-making, as described by Walter (2014, p. 225), is the central task of qualitative data analysis.

The final crucial stage of data analysis at which saturation was reached was during the writing process, which allowed for intensive discussions with my supervisors. These discussions on the data analysis resulted in the final structure of the findings. Themes identified were from both manifest content and latent content. The data was organised into three parts: young people's everyday practices on Facebook; young people knowing and unknowing risks on Facebook; and young people making and taking risks on Facebook. The first part provided manifest themes, showing the tangible or surface content, and the second two parts presented latent themes, showing the underlying meanings. These themes with sub-themes were used in the final reporting of the findings.

Ethics

Ethical research involves 'ensuring that ethical principles and values always govern research involving humans' (Habibis 2014, p. 73). Congress and McAuliffe (2006, p. 161) state that 'social workers need to address continually the importance of ethical practice'. Echoing this

standpoint, Habibis (2014, p. 94) states: ‘ethical considerations at all stages of the research process is [sic] an essential component of professional research’. This research was developed and conducted in accordance with the Australian Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics (2010, p. 36). Further, ethical guidelines set out by the University of Tasmania Human Research Ethics in Social Sciences were observed. A full committee application was presented to the Ethics Committee of the University of Tasmania. Upon official approval from the committee, the study commenced. Following this, an ethics amendment application was presented to the Ethics Committee of the University of Tasmania, and proposed changes to the project were carried out.

Social research has an impact on people, both directly and indirectly, therefore the potential for social harm needs to be consciously considered (Habibis 2014, p. 94). As Marvasti (2004, p. 137) writes, it is the researcher’s responsibility ‘to minimize potential harm as much as possible’. Fetterman (1989) highlights that ethics pervades every stage of ethnographic research and that ethnographers first and foremost must ensure that they do no harm to participants. The primary ethical concerns of this study were: confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent, online environment considerations, and young people’s well-being.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity were primary ethical concerns of this research. The Australian Association of Social Workers’ Code of Ethics (2010, p. 37) states that social workers ‘will seek to ensure the anonymity and/or confidentiality of research participants and data’. Confidentiality is a client’s right, and allows clients to trust practitioners and feel respected (De Jong & Berg 2002, p. 254). Confidentiality aims to disguise and protect the identity of participants, and to ensure that the information they provide cannot be linked back to them (Liamputtong 2013, p. 323; Habibis 2014, p. 95). Liamputtong (2013, p. 41) states that ‘[t]he most disturbing and unethical harm in research is when the participants are damaged by the disclosure of their private world’. Steps taken to maximise confidentiality for this research included:

- Treating all contact with participants in a confidential manner,
- Conducting all interviews myself, and ensuring they were only accessible to me,

- Storing data and transcripts on a password-protected computer, and
- Wiping all data from the computer at the completion of the research.

Anonymity of participants was crucial to the ethical soundness of the research. Habibis (2014, p. 95) defines anonymity as 'the protection of participants from identification as participants in the research'. Gobo (2008, p. 138) stresses that anonymity of participants must be guaranteed in ethical research. Every attempt was made to ensure that all participants remained anonymous. Measures taken to promote anonymity included:

- Using Facebook settings to support young people's anonymity. The friends list, which commonly publicly displays all people connected to the profile page, was hidden. This meant that the ability for a participant to connect with other participants was limited and that only I had full access to the participants involved,
- Encouraging young people, through the information provided on the research page, to keep their personal information, such as contact details, private,
- As data was recorded for data analysis and results were disseminated, removing identifying information. This included de-identifying information about the participant and friends of the participant who had interacted on a participant's profile page,
- Removing all identifying details from individual interview transcripts and storing the transcripts separately from the consent forms, and
- Writing the final report so that no participant could be individually recognised. This included using pseudonyms for all participants in the written thesis and blurring images of participants or their friends.

Informed consent

The Australian Association of Social Workers' (AASW) Code of Ethics (2010, p. 36) states that: 'Social workers will ensure that informed consent to participation has been obtained'. To meet this standard, participants must be informed, in a way that they can understand, of

the purpose of the research, their role, any risks they may face, and that their decision to participate is voluntary (AASW 2010, p. 37). An essential ethical criterion for this research was obtaining informed consent from participants, which derives, in principle, from respect for the right of people to possess control over their lives (Burton and Steane 2004, p. 64). Participants must be provided comprehensive and correct information about the research and their participation (Liamputtong 2013, p. 363). Researchers must be confident that participants have understood the information, and that their participation is voluntary (Gobo 2008, p. 140; Habibis 2014, p. 89). Liamputtong (2013, p. 39) also stresses that participants need to understand that they have the right to refuse to participate in or to withdraw from the research at any time.

As the AASW Code of Ethics (2010, p. 37) states: 'Social workers will consider carefully the process of voluntary consent in situations where the research participant may be a child or adolescent'. Young people's capacity to consent was given careful consideration in the development of this research. 'The National Statement' (The National Health and Medical Research Council, the Australian Research Council and Universities Australia 2018, p. 65) acknowledges that children and young people have different levels of maturity that correspond with their capacity to be involved in decision-making. In this research, young people between the ages of 15 and 18 years are understood, in the course of their development towards adulthood, to be at a level of maturity where they could both understand and consent to involvement in the study.

This research adopted the National Statement's (The National Health and Medical Research Council et al. 2018, p. 65) position that young people between 15 and 18 years of age are 'not vulnerable through immaturity in ways that warrant additional consent from a parent or guardian'.

This position is supported in the literature. There is a growing body of research that argues that young people have the capacity to provide informed consent without the added support of their parent or guardian. For example, Ambuel and Rappaport (1992, p. 130) challenge the presumption that minors are not competent. Kuther and Posada (2004) discuss how developmental psychology demonstrates that adolescents can make meaningful decisions, and recommend enhancing and respecting minors' developing autonomy. Likewise, Broome and Stieglitz (1992) highlight how developmental theories provide some rationale for reconsidering the arbitrary age of 18 years for informed consent. Zinner (1995, p. 323) argues

that most adolescents are developmentally prepared to make decisions for themselves, and strongly challenges the assumption that both consent and assent are static concepts. Research by Mann, Harmoni and Power (1989) asserts that there is evidence to support the idea that, by the age of 15 years, many adolescents show a reliable level of competence in understanding decision-making, creative problem-solving, correctness of choice, and commitment to a course of action. My research engaged with young people aged 15 to 18 years, and respected their ability to provide informed consent to participate.

Facebook is an example of an online space that has considered and enacted young people's capacity to give their consent. Facebook supports individual users to control and dictate the way in which they engage with this technology. One of the principles asserted by Facebook (2019b) is that:

> People should have the freedom to share whatever information they want, in any medium and any format, and have the right to connect online with anyone – any person, organization or service – as long as they both consent to the connection.

Furthermore, Facebook's 'Statement of Rights and Responsibilities' (2015) highlights to all users, which includes young people that '[they] own all of the content and information [they] post on Facebook, and [they] can control how it is shared through [their] privacy and application settings'. In a similar way to how Facebook recognises that young people can make individual choices and maintain control of their information, this research considered that young people have the capacity to make decisions about their involvement in this research.

The following steps were taken to advance young people's informed consent in this research:

- Providing publicly accessible and detailed information about the research via the Facebook research page and a URL on the University website research page. Making the information available in these two domains meant that young people and their parents and/or carers could readily access information about the project to support young people to make an informed and considered decision about their involvement. Separate information sheets were provided for Stage One (see Appendix 1) and the individual online interviews that comprised Stage Two (see Appendix 3),

- Welcoming young people as they connected to the research, and reminding them through email to re-read the information sheets and consent forms. The information sheet advised potential participants to discuss their involvement in the research with a trusted adult or friend. I also asked all people who expressed their interest in participating in an online interview to re-read the information sheets and the consent forms, and

- Directing each participant, before each online interview commenced, to read the information on email interviews (see Appendix 3), and then sending them a link to the consent form. Participants were asked to read the information, and if they agreed to continue, to copy and paste the information with their name and the date completed, as well as the words ‘I agree’. Once the participant had sent the electronic consent form, the interview began.

Online environment considerations

Age of participants

It was possible that the sample could have included people outside the target age range. This was not expected, or ideal, but nonetheless it could not be guaranteed that all participants were actually aged 15 to 18. This was a potential limitation and there were a number of procedures in place to avoid this:

- The advertisement on Facebook was targeted to people within the age range, and the recruitment poster also specified that participants should be aged 15 to 18 (see Figure 6, above),

- When a potential participant asked to participate, I scanned their profile page to ascertain if the profile reflected someone within the age range. While this may not have been obvious or proveable, if there was any doubt that a potential participant was not within the age range, I did not accept them,

- When a participant joined the research and I was able to view their profile, I then checked again that they appeared to meet the requirements, and

- All information sheets detailed that the research was seeking participants within the age range.

In spite of these measures, the possibility of someone outside the age range participating remained. It could be said that this may have influenced the data collected, as it may not be a true representation of the experiences under exploration. This question of the validity of online research is explored in the work of Nicholas Hookway, who used blogs as a source of data. Hookway (2008, p. 97) asks, 'how can the truth be ensured in any research scenario? How do you know, for instance, if someone is being honest in an interview, and for that matter, how someone ticks boxes on a survey questionnaire?' Hookway (2008, p. 98) further highlights how this mistrust of online data is an example of the 'interview society' in which many social scientists believe that the 'only path to individual 'authenticity' is through the face-to-face interview'. I agree with these ideas, and believe that the procedures described above were sufficient to attract participants who were within the age range and to deter those who were not.

Viewing information of 'friends' of participants

During data collection, due to the social and interactive nature of Facebook, viewing information of participants' 'friends' was unavoidable. Such information included wall posts and profile pictures that were posted to the Facebook pages of participants who had consented to being involved.

Hookway (2008) discusses the notions of what is public and what is private when conducting online research. Hookway (2008, p. 105) takes on the 'fair game – public domain' position, arguing that information provided in a public arena that is publicly accessible negates the need to gain consent. Furthermore, Hookway (2008, p. 105) emphasises that online information sourced from blogs is not only public in the sense of being publicly accessible, but also in the way in which it is defined by users. This concept can be applied to research on social media, such as Facebook, too. Facebook users can interact with one another both 'publicly' and 'privately': publicly through making wall posts and tagging one another; and privately through email and chat. It can be assumed that people who interact through the 'public' means on Facebook are aware that others are able to view these interactions. Therefore, in this research, implicit consent was taken from 'friends' of the participants.

Regardless of the above standpoint, people who were ‘friends’ of participants, were treated with the same anonymity measures as participants in the research. All data collected that displayed both participants’ and ‘friends’ of participants’ information was de-identified.

Participants accessing each other’s Facebook information

Facebook settings were used to hide the research page’s friends list from users other than the researcher. If a participant chose to make a post to my research profile page, this was visible to other participants. Participants were informed on the information sheet (Appendix 1) that their profile picture and comment could be public to others. On this information sheet, participants were also encouraged to keep their contact details private from other participants.

To further support participants’ informed consent regarding other participants viewing their information, in the information sheet (Appendix 1), I incorporated the following statement:

> Please remember that if you make a wall post, other participants are able to click on your name which directs them to your profile. The amount of information they will have access to depends on what your privacy settings are. If you wish to limit the amount of information that people who are not on your friends list can see, you can do so in your privacy settings.

Young people’s well-being

Of great importance to this research was the consideration and protection of young people’s well-being. Acting in the best interests of young people is a crucial ethical standard. In this research, there was no reason to believe that participation by young people was against their best interests. Beneficence and non-maleficence are two principles that are commonly used to argue that ethical research is achieved if its benefits outweigh its potential for harm (Murphy & Dingwall 2001, p. 340). In addition to the actions already described, I attended to the protection of young people’s well-being in the following ways:

- I did not ask participants to do anything that they were not already doing on Facebook. Participants’ engagement in the project simply requested of them that they connect with the research and engage in conversation if they chose to, which is at the centre of the Facebook experience,

- I informed participants that their participation was voluntary. They were told that they did not need to share anything they considered to be private or felt uncomfortable discussing,

- Throughout the interview process in Stage Two, I regularly checked that the young person wished to continue her/his involvement with the research. For example: ‘I just wanted to let you know that we can stop chatting at any time’ and ‘I’m happy to keep going if you are keen, but also happy to call it quits if you’ve had enough for one night. Up to you – just thought I would check. What do you think?’,

- I told participants they could stop the interview and/or withdraw at any time without providing explanation or being judged,

- I made it clear to participants that they would not be able to become my personal friend on Facebook; participants were told that the online relationship was contextual and time-limited,

- As the research was conducted online, I acknowledged particular considerations of health and well-being. Participants may have already established ways of looking after themselves while communicating via the Internet, but an information sheet (see Appendix 5) was accessible to participants, which provided suggestions about how to avoid problems such as fatigue, and

- I also provided contact details of youth support services to all participants (see Appendix 6).

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how the methods for this research were youth-centred and influenced by the sociocultural theory of risk. I also revisited the aim of the research and the research questions. The methodology adopted for the research, a postmodern, qualitative, ethnographic netnography, was explained. The research setting, social media, and specifically Facebook, was presented. The sampling and recruitment framework was then described, detailing the sampling criteria and the recruitment of participants. The chapter progressed to outline the data collection methods: Stage One involving the creation of a research profile and collection

of online textual data; Stage Two involving online interviews. Data analysis and interpretation were explained. The chapter then highlighted the ethical considerations of this research, which included: confidentiality; anonymity; informed consent; online environment considerations; and young people's well-being.

In summary, the methodology used in this research was based on an interpretive, qualitative paradigm. This approach proved most appropriate for the exploration of how young people engage with risk on Facebook. This method provided flexibility in the exploration of topics in the interview schedule while exploring ideas that were important to participants. This method also allowed for the exploration of textual and visual data from participants' Facebook profile pages.

The findings of the research are presented in the following three chapters.

Chapter Five: Young People's Everyday Practices on Facebook

Please be aware that the findings chapters contain content that is graphic and may cause distress.

This exploratory research asked: 'How do young people engage with risk through their everyday practices on Facebook?' The findings indicate that young people interact on Facebook through everyday practices, and that they engage with risk through 'knowing' and 'unknowing' risk, and by 'making' and 'taking' risks. The findings illustrate the interactive space of everyday practices of young people on Facebook. To begin this chapter, I present the participant profiles, which provide categorised information on the age, gender, sexual preference, and locations of participants in Stage One (observation of participants' Facebook profiles). I detail the names, ages, genders and locations of the 16 interview participants in Stage Two (see Table 1, below). This categorised information is provided to show the diversity of participants and allow for deeper understanding of participant responses. I also provide an overview of key themes from my analysis. This is summarised in Tables 2, 3 and 4, below. The first part of the research findings are then presented on young people's everyday practices on Facebook.

In this and the following two chapters, I present the research findings based on the analysis of interviews with participants and observations of their online behaviour. The extracts provided are presented verbatim to retain the authenticity and meaning of their responses. Each participant has been given a pseudonym to ensure they cannot be identified. Further, participants' friends who were named in posts have also been given pseudonyms. All Facebook screenshots which contained identifying information have had faces pixilated and names removed. In addition, quotes that contained identifying information have been altered, and identifying details replaced with '*'.

Participant profiles

The final sample consisted of 73 participants in Stage One and 16 participants in Stage Two. All participants were 15 to 18 years old and lived within Australia. Of the 73 participants in Stage One, 44 were female and 29 male. Figure 14, below, shows the number of participants categorised by age and gender, Figure 15 provides a snapshot of participants' sexual preference as self-identified, and Figure 16 shows the participants' locations across Australia.

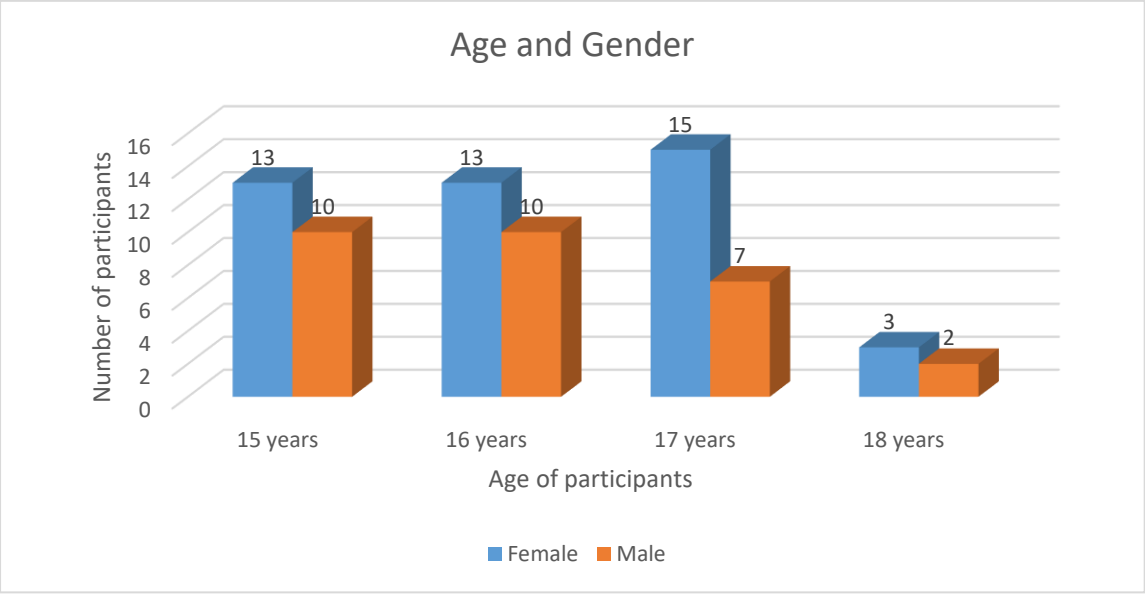


Figure 14: Participants categorised by age and gender

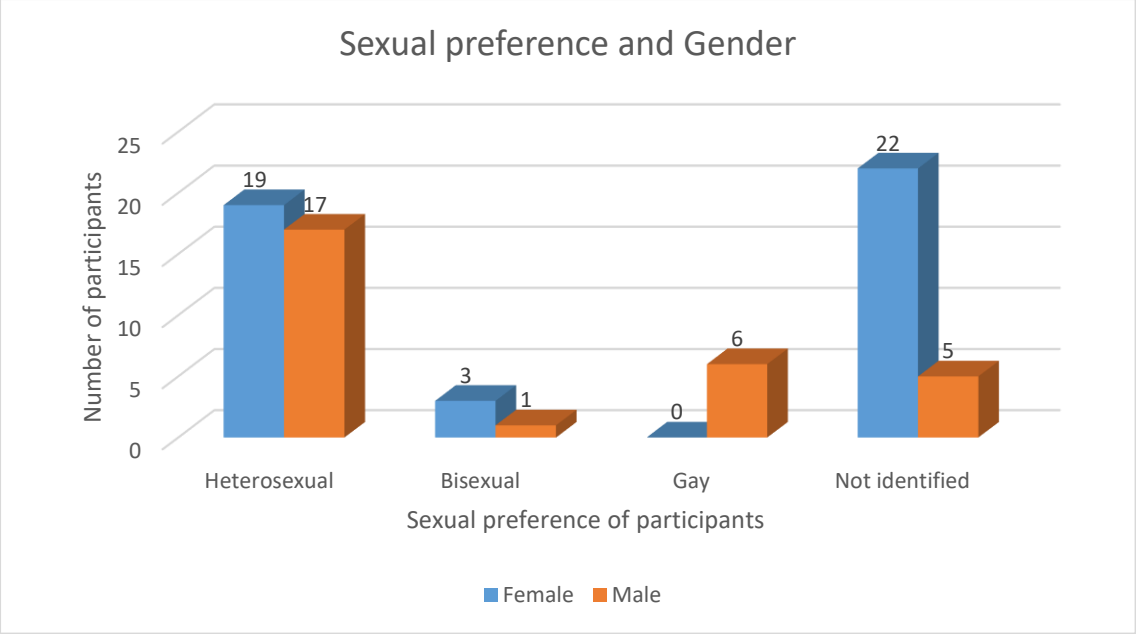


Figure 15: Participants categorised by sexual preference and gender

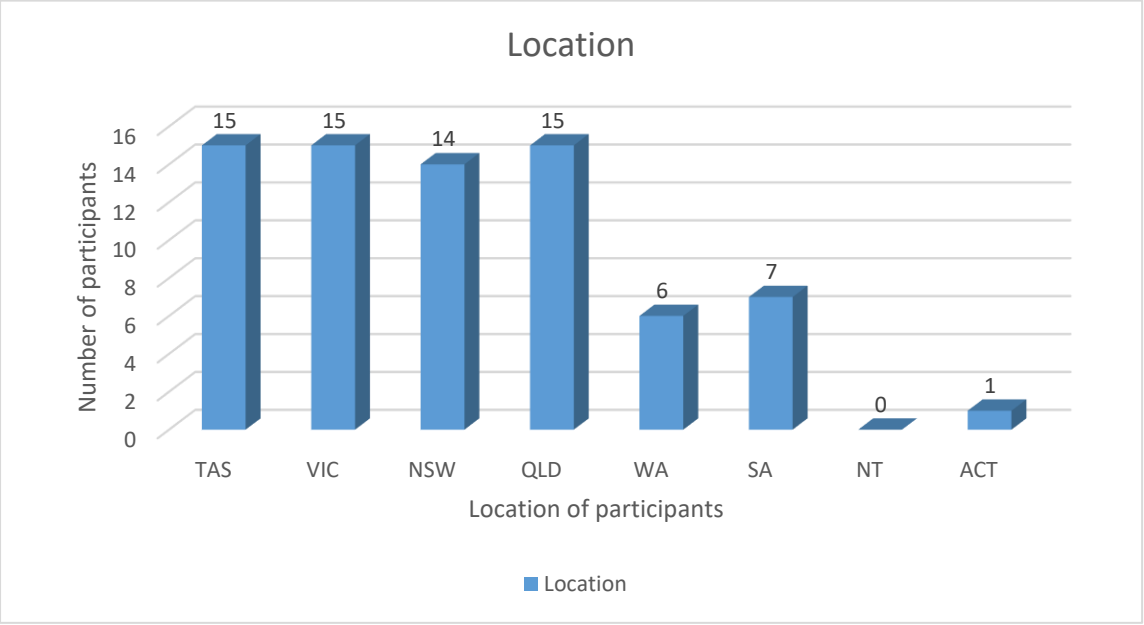


Figure 16: Location of participants

The sixteen participants in Stage Two, who were a subset of Stage One, consisted of 10 females and six males. Table 1 provides an overview of the interview participants' age, gender and location.

Table 1: Profile of interview participants

Name	Age	Gender	Location
Abby	15	F	TAS
Bec	16	F	QLD
Courtney	16	F	TAS
Georgina	17	F	VIC
Jane	17	F	TAS
Lily	17	F	TAS
Lucas	16	M	QLD
Maddie	15	F	WA
Marko	16	M	VIC
Michael	16	M	VIC
Nicole	17	F	TAS
Niko	16	M	NSW
Noah	16	M	QLD
Robyn	16	F	NSW
Sinead	17	F	WA
Will	16	M	QLD

Overview of findings

The research findings are presented over three chapters. An overview of the findings detailed in this chapter, Chapter Five, is provided in Table 2, below. These findings give an account of young people's everyday practices on Facebook. I have adopted a youth-centred view of the topic of young people and risk on Facebook, and thus this first findings chapter presents the everyday practices of young people on Facebook. This chapter provides a snapshot of the practices that young people described and participated in. This focus on the practices of young people allows for an account of the lived experience of young people on Facebook. This chapter is an important part of the presentation of findings as it provides the context of how young people act and interact on Facebook. Through these actions and interactions young people show their everyday experiences of using Facebook. These everyday practices are the context in which ideas about risk are formulated and engagement with risk is done, each of which will be explored in the following two chapters.

Table 2: Overview of young people's everyday practices on Facebook (Chapter Five)

Young people's everyday practices on Facebook	• Being visible and accessible • Managing accounts, connections and content • Connecting with others • Participating in group trends • Showing their sense of self • Sharing issues of importance

The following two chapters, Chapters Six and Seven, present key themes from the analysis of how young people engage with risk on Facebook. The findings show that young people 'know' and 'unknow' risks through recognising, reframing and normalising risks. This engagement is the focus of Chapter Six. Then, in Chapter Seven, findings are presented on how young people 'make' and 'take' risks. This is done through three kinds of practices: connection, content and collective practices. A summary of these ways in which young people engage with risk is given in Table 3 and 4, below.

Table 3: Overview of young people knowing and unknowing risks on Facebook (Chapter Six)

Young people knowing and unknowing risks on Facebook	Recognising risks	• Controlling privacy risks • Decisions on disclosing personal information • Public posts and private chats • Supporting the emotional well-being of others • Opposing bullying through supporting friends
	Reframing risks	• Insignificance of fighting • 'Hacking' for fun • Harmless 'stalking' and 'raping'
	Normalising risks	• 'Ordinary' self-harm • Violence 'in jest' • 'Liking' sexual violence • Offhand threats of aggression • Casual and comical shaming

Table 4: Overview of young people making and taking risks on Facebook (Chapter Seven)

Young people making and taking risks on Facebook	Connection practices	• Considering connecting with 'friends' • Affirming friendships • Making romantic relationships public
	Content practices	• Assertive and defensive posts • Expressing feelings • Posting sexually suggestive photos
	Collective practices	• Communal fighting through argumentative banter • Collectively supporting friends • Sharing bullying experiences with friends • Public slut-shaming • Sexualised bullying of females

Young people's everyday practices on Facebook

Being visible and accessible

For young people, communicating on Facebook is commonplace. As Robyn shared: '*I am always on Facebook, from the moment I wake up till the moment I sleep*'. Communicating in this way has become so engrained in young people's lives that it seems indispensable. Facebook is the place where young people are visible and accessible to friends, where they can be social, and where they make and maintain friendships. For participants, Facebook was described as a place to spend time, 'hang out', and communicate with other people. For example, Jane commented that Facebook is '*a place I can come to, where i can chat with friends and family and keep in contact with people who i dont get to see a whole lot*'.

Jane, a college student from Ulverstone, Tasmania stated: '*it does get addictive. with people always online who you can just have a chat with even if it is of no relevance. you just spend time on here because you can*'. Similarly, Ruby shared: '*I'm hooked I'll admit it. I check it when I wake up and when I go to sleep. Yep seriously it's the first thing I do and the last. I 'm all about facebook. It sounds lame, but I might as well be honest*'. These comments demonstrate the popularity, commonality and regularity of young people using Facebook. These comments reflect the wider research data that tells a story of Facebook being an

everyday part of young people's lives, facilitating connections with others. This was a common story across the sample, regardless of age or gender.

There was a clear sense in the data of the importance of being present on Facebook. Bec, a young female from Queensland, shared:

> *for a while last year i chose to deactivate mine but because its such a social place, i felt like i was missing out on a lot of contact with peers and because youre not on there, youre basically invisible. sure you can fo[c]us on school and other things more, but its also a paranoia thing. like i said, everyones on it so if someones writing stuff about you, you would want to know and not be oblivious*

Her comments highlight how being on Facebook means that you are part of a social group, and how removing yourself can result in missing out. The lack of contact that would occur was likened by Bec to being 'invisible'. She also pointed out how being on Facebook allows you to access things that may be being said about you by others.

Time spent on Facebook was described by participants as being a regular part of their lives. Facebook was depicted by 56 per cent of interview participants as a constant, every day, readily accessible source of communication and entertainment. Using Facebook had become a normal part of the routine of the participants' lives. Lily admitted to using Facebook '*Everyday*' and Michael acknowledged that Facebook was '*something that I'll open without even knowing*'.

Participants also highlighted the popularity of Facebook. For example, Michael described how it was rare to be their age and not be on Facebook, '*pretty much everyone is on. It's very very, rare to come across someone over like 14 these days with out facebook*'. As a friend of Michelle commented, '*ur nothing without facebook*'. Despite the overwhelming popularity of Facebook, one participant, Niko, knew of '*a couple of people that are restricted from parents that are my age*'. Five participants posted status updates acknowledging the large amount of time spent on Facebook. For example, Michael shared, '*I just realised I actually spend wayyyy too much time on facebook haha*', and Oliver mentioned, '*That depressing moment when you realise that facebook is seriously your whole life :/*'.

Lucas is a 16-year-old male from Toowoomba, Queensland. He attends high school and has 75 friends on Facebook. Lucas clearly showed how entrenched using Facebook is in young people's lives as he commented, '*i use facebook at home, school, work, friends houses... everywhere, really! and i use facebook on everything that supports it, like my iphone, my laptops, my ipad, my ps3, and anything else*'. As Abby admitted, Facebook was used by young people '*Everywhere*', and Bec similarly said, '*i use it everywhere… telstra has free facebook haha*'. Like Lucas, other participants demonstrated an appreciation of the mobile nature of Facebook, which allowed them to be more accessible to their friends. Participants accessed Facebook on a range of devices, such as computers, laptops, iPads and tablets, iPods and mobile phones. Young people also used these devices in a range of settings, such as at home, at school, at friends' houses, and 'on-the-go'. Lucas described how he was connected to others through Facebook for much of the day, in order to receive notifications: '*whenever i can, like in the morning before school, in class, at lunch, after school, at work in the afternoon... whenever i have access to my phone or my computer*'.

Due to the mobile accessibility of Facebook, young people were using their devices to log on while at school. As Niko shared, '*I use facebook everyday after school maybe even in school hours on my phone*'. Nearly a quarter of participants (22 per cent) showed evidence, or disclosed, that they used Facebook while at school. Photos and videos demonstrating young people using Facebook at school were seen on nine young people's pages. Sometimes participants uploaded the content themselves, and other times they were tagged in photos while at school. Lauren posted a photo taken in class of her and two other students with the sarcastic caption '*terribly interested in whatever the teacher was saying*'. Examinations were surprisingly not even off limits, as a friend of Abby's uploaded a photo taken while sitting a NAPLAN test, and, similarly, Marko was tagged in a school photo showing students sitting for a test. Groups of friends were depicted in content uploaded while on school grounds, as a friend of Leah's uploaded a video taken of students dancing while at school and six friends were tagged. Contrastingly, Nicole explained how she avoided using Facebook at school, stating: '*I mainly use it at home – I'm kept pretty busy at school; unless I'm trying to organise a last minute meeting or study session, Facebook's not on the to do list*'.

Lily talked about how the only time she would not use Facebook was while she was at a friend's house. She explained this, '*if I'm at a friends I try to avoid it… Because it respect… When your with a friend your there to socialize with them not to socialize on Facebook*'.

Other comments reflected similar concerns about the etiquette of using Facebook in the presence of others. As Nicole shared:

> *If i'm staying with friends for a few days, I'll certainly check my facebook, but if i'm just there after school or on the weekend, it seems a bit anti-social unless, once again, I need to organise something*

Young people talked about Facebook as being intertwined with other aspects of their lives. As Izzy stated, '*it has become just a part of life really*'. Facebook was not something separate or different, but rather just another aspect of their social lives. Hannah explained, '*I kinda see facebook as being part of real life you know... Facebook is not something opposite to real-life is it. Well not the way i see it anyway. It's just another part of my 'real-life'*. Ryan shared:

> *It's sort of just the same thing. Like facebook is real-life if you know what I mean. It's just one part of our life. Like school is a part of life and work is a part of life facebook is another part of life. It's just another "place" we live out our life*

Managing accounts, connections and content

A part of young people's everyday practices was managing their accounts, their connections, and the content shared. Creating new accounts and temporarily deactivating accounts were common practices among young people. Niko described how he changed his account as he liked, '*I've created and deleting quite a few facebook accounts*'. Almost a quarter of participants (23 per cent) showed evidence of doing this. Young people chose to make new accounts in order to manage the multitude of friends that they had connected with. Megan stated that she: '*Just had too many rabdoms [randoms] nd couldn't be bothered deleting them haha xx*'. Creating a new Facebook account also had the effect of removing past conversations from view. As Lucas shared:

> *heh. funny story, i hated my email account, and had a bad breakup with some slut oops, did i say slut, i meant girl ^.^ anyways, because you cant delete inboxes and there were over 11 thousand bad memories in there i decided to make a new account*

Deactivation in order to disengage from Facebook was another function that young people had control over. Deactivation of accounts was done openly by young people, and their reasons included a desire to spend more time on other things. Marko posted the following status:

> *goodbye everyone facebook is getting deactivated… just realised right now I hav been on facebook for more than 2 hours and thought to myself I could have spent that time doing something beneficial.*

For Alex, deactivation was a strategy to deter Facebook friends from deliberately bombarding him with excessive notifications. He wrote:

> *Too anyone who's wondering, I didn't unfriend you for some stupid reason, I temporarily deactivated my Facebook – it's a really effective way to stop people from LIKING EVERYTHING OF YOURS AND GIVING YOU HEAPS OF NOTIFICATIONS :D.*

Managing connections on Facebook was also part of the everyday practices of young people. Just over a fifth of participants (21 per cent), both male and female, managed connections through deleting friends from their Facebook accounts. Nicole shared: '*If I have trouble with a person/ dislike the content that they're sharing, I'll remove them*'. Nicole's comment is demonstrative of the ease and convenience described by participants of deleting Facebook friends. Considerations about deleting Facebook friends were evident in interactions between young people. Again, the ease of deleting friends was apparent in posts made with little concern or regard for the person they were unfriending. Courtney posted: *'I'm going through, and deleting a heap of people. Don't take it to heart, it's just because I don't know you very well*'; and Bohdan shared: *'Deleting people that annoy me is probably the best thing I have ever done*'.

Female participants, all 16 years old, were open about their intentions to delete friends on Facebook. Tess posted the status: '*going on a deleting spree! If you wanna be deleted make it easy for me and like the status*'. Three people liked Tess's status. Courtney posted a similar message, although in reverse, requesting that her friends like her status if they did not want to be deleted: '*like if you don't want to be deleted. Deleting basically everyone*'. Bobbi-Jo also openly expressed her intentions of deleting people: '*instead of deleting facebook ill just*

delete the randoms who wont miss me'. She then shared, '*I deleted like 300 odd people and a whole one person tried to add me back wooo! :D*'.

Deleting people was often done when the young person disliked the other's behaviour. As Niko shared: '*I would delete them if they were causing me trouble and making me upset*'. Similarly, Abby stated:

> *I delete people if they are rude to me or other people on my friends lists or if they generally just post to many offensive or mean statuses Like people being bullies and making fun of people for their appearance or how they do things or even silly stuff like having a favourite band that the person being the bully might not like and then theres people who make racist comments or jokes about gay people and stuff*

Blocking of friends is another feature on Facebook. Noah spoke of how the '*block feature would be commonly used*'. However, only 10 per cent of participants' pages showed evidence of blocking others or being blocked themselves. Noah shared how he had blocked four people in the past year. He had chosen to block these people due to arguments at school, but acknowledged that if a truce was reached then he would unblock them. Other posts detailing blocking friends included:

> *Ok I try to apologise, with my deepest and sincerest thoughts and what do I get..? BLOCKED.. Hah, why is it so hard for you to believe that I truly am sorry… (Tammy)*

> *How weak, you delete and block me and within a day you send me a friend request… (Fiona)*

Young people also managed their content on Facebook as part of their everyday practice. Deletion of comments and photos was common among participants across age and gender. For example, Yvette commented that she felt she needed to edit her Facebook page after posting while intoxicated: '*Hate checking ur Facebook the morning after a big night. Never know what to expect and Immediately deleting stuff lol*'. A friend of Yvette commented: '*Lmfao! It should be don't drink and facebook as well as don't drink and drive*'.

Comments demonstrated that young people deleted comments both on their own accord and after friends requested that they do so:

That wasn't very nice (friend of Lachlan)

I'm sorry I shall delete it, I took it too far (Lachlan)

Thanks Lachlan (friend of Lachlan)

You tagged me in a post? (friend of Bec)

I did, but then I deleted it. NOW WHAT. (Bec)

Posts were sometimes deleted after receiving feedback from family or friends. A friend of Ben's had posted a comment speaking negatively about a high school. Another friend urged him to delete it: '*Hey Huey your not a part of anything to do with this. Delete the status*'. Tess posted a comment about her unhappiness at school, saying: '*no point going to a school where you are unhappy at and clearly the students don't want you there… I might do everyone a favour and move, but then if I move they would of won*'. After receiving four supportive comments and three likes, Tess deleted the status.

Deleting of photos was also observed among participants, with two requesting that photos be removed. A conversation between Tess and a friend revealed that they were uploading photos of each other as babies. Tess's friend commented: '*DELETE THAT RIGHT NOW..*'. Courtney, for example, posted a comment to a Facebook friend encouraging her to file a report with Facebook about a photo being posted: an image captured on a webcam had been uploaded showing the female friend. The female in the picture commented '*DELETE*', but the person who chose to upload the photo responded '*nope their staying up*'. The female urged the person to remove the photo again and then Courtney commented, '*report it. :p*'.

Connecting with others

Facebook provided the opportunity for young people to be connected and stay connected. As Abby commented: '*you don't have to be near someone to be able to talk to them*'. Jane talked about the ease of being instantly connected: '*a very big majority of people have it, and i can add many people i know and then they are only a click away if i need them, or have to contact*

them and it is just so easy to use'. Facebook also allows users to connect simultaneously with more than one person through group chat. Georgina described this: '*a way to easily interact with multiple of my friends at once. I talk with my friends more on Facebook then in real life, sadly… It's easy to contact (multiple) friends on*'.

The interviews demonstrated that being constantly available to others through Facebook was important to many participants (37.5 per cent). This theme of connecting with others was evident across the sample, regardless of age or gender:

> *Whenever I'm on a computer facebook will be open in the background… I mean you never no when someones going to speak to you or your going to get a notification or something. It sort of leaves you hanging that why its so popular (Michael)*

> *the majority of people are practically always on Facebook… While direct verbal contact requires them in the vicinity, right? It's like they're always around, just over the Internet. So it's just easier then seeking them out (Georgina)*

Participants had friend lists ranging from 14 to 2,446 friends. Seven participants had fewer than 100 friends, and eight participants had more than 1,000. The mean number of friends for young people was 522. The number of friends a person had on Facebook was identified to be of importance to young people because it allowed them to connect with more people. Comments made about the number of friends on Facebook included:

> *it just occurred to me I HAVE NO FB FRIENDS so suggest some for me? Lol (Lucas)*

> *Oh my god almost 100 friends (Henry)*

>> *Henry that's slack (friend of Henry)*

>> *After like a month or 2 (Henry)*

>> *I've been on for 7 months and had 90 friends in my 3 week (friend of Henry)*

The use of Facebook as a simple means of communication was evident in wall posts, which young people used to make plans. For example, Ben posted: '*In town, anyone there?*'; and Will posted: '*Message or inbox if your keen to chat or go out this arvo/night*'. Robyn found Facebook to be a necessary communication tool for young people, especially when they were out of credit on their phone, '*if my friends don't have credit I can talk to them*'.

Posts were often put out by young people (23 per cent) requesting that their friends converse with them. These requests were presented as open requests to all their Facebook friends to contact them by Skype, phone, email or chat. For example, Joel posted: '*Mmm someone should send me a telecommunicational message?*'; and Hannah asked: *'Anyone want to facetime, webcam, tinychat or skype*'.

Marko described how, in addition to providing a means of communication, Facebook was an important source of help with his schooling: '*Facebook for me is more of a complimentary tool for school due to the fact that I use it to chat to friends about school assessed coursework's, homework etc.*.'. Like Marko, Nicole also used Facebook to connect with others for school work:

> *My favourite thing about Facebook would be the ease of communication. For example; I study an alternative course to the TCE, called the ******. We have a facebook group for everyone at school studying it, which we use literally daily to get help with difficult homework, missed assignments because of absence, etc. and also to create social events and study sessions that everyone can see*

Facebook posts also revealed that many young people (23 per cent) used the site to discuss school-related matters with their friends:

> *Have nooooo idea what to do on science assignment -.- any help? (Hannah)*
>
> *CAN SOMEONE PLEASE SEND ME THE HOLIDAY HOMEWORK FOR ENGLISH (completed)…. Lol jokes just the questions (Marko)*
>
> *Ms Stones 11ENG Class What the hell do we put in the synopsis? (Tammy)*

Two participants, Yvette and Nick, used Facebook to promote their work. Yvette posted updates about her hairdressing, such as: '*Next week and the week after, during the school*

holidays, I need some foil models and some cutting models, inbox me if interested. All half price! Really cheap'. Nick promoted his visual media, lighting and sound business, posting a link to his business page, as well as his email and mobile number. Nathan, too, used his Facebook to seek help with work, posting a status asking if anyone could cover a morning shift for him to which three people responded in the affirmative.

Participating in group trends

Another part of young people's everyday practices on Facebook was participating in group trends or chain actions. Two trends were common: the 'like/dislike' chain and the 'tbh' ('to be honest') chain:

> *tbh: I still remember your cute little smile when we first met and me and melinda were like of ma god finally hot boys in Darwin.*
> *Like: you're so niceee and a great guy.*
> *Dislike: you live all the waaay in Tasmania ☹*
> *Rate: tennnn. (friend of Lachlan)*

Two thirds of participants (66 per cent) engaged in these chain actions. Both male and female participants took part, although it was predominantly the 15- and 16-year-olds who conversed in this way. The 'like/dislike' trend was visible on several young people's Facebook pages. A person would post a comment to a friend's page stating what they liked and disliked about them, and then that friend would do the same in return, and for each new friend they included. Emma casually invited her friends to engage with it: '*I'm freaking bored so lets do the like and dislike thing yeah? You know what to do*'.

Another trend was the 'tbh' chain. This involved young people writing honest statements on each other's walls. An example posted to Flynn's wall was: '*Tbh: Even though I didn't like u at first when u dated Bianca I was wrong and im sorry. Your really nice and I know u made bianca smile and happy and thanks for that☺*'. Oliver posted an invitation to his friends offering to do a tbh for them, '*Like for a tbh?*'; and Penny posted '*Tbh videos*', which received 101 likes from friends.

Other chain actions on Facebook were seen, including:

like for a best memory? (Hannah)

Like this status and ill write an anonymous opinion of you in the comments, you then have to like which one u think is yours (Oliver)

For one hour inbox me any questions (rude, funny, personal) anything at all and I will answer them 100% honestly (Tess)

Inbox me a question and a number and I will answer it in a status (Priya)

These trends also invited young people to give likes to their friends for a more personal message through email or private messaging:

Like for an inboxed confession. (Bohdan)

Like for a pm (Katharine)

Like for cute texts (Bohdan)

Like for a kinky inbox? (Ben)

While most young people keenly participated in these chain actions, two participants expressed their frustration with the trend. Courtney stated her dislike of chains overtaking her newsfeed: '*I dislike when all these Hug, Kiss, Date status' come up on my newsfeed. I have literally never done one of these, and never will, purely because they spam my newsfeed and make me wanna unsubscribe to everyone that does them*'. Marko also shared his dislike of these statuses: '*sick of people writing 'like if you doing this' or 'like if your that' as their status… if you haven't got anything good to say don't say anything lol*'.

Showing their sense of self

Facebook was sometimes described by participants (mostly females) as a means of reflecting and sharing their sense of self with friends. This was another part of the everyday practice of young people on Facebook: '*It allows me to show people who I am*' (Lily). Nicole believed that through Facebook statuses others could *'get little insights into everyones lives*'. The content of what was being shared on Facebook was described by participants as being an

overview of themselves: '*I guess as life changes you change your profile up to suit where you are at. Of course it is a big reflection of youself*' (Penny). And Ryan stated:

> *i have music and tv shows and whatever linked to my profile. That just shows people what i'm into. I have some cheer pages i'm linked in to. And some funny ones. You know and movies i like and instagram and soundcloud show up. It just gives people the whole picture of what you are about*

Most participants (89 per cent), both male and female, used their pages to showcase their identity by presenting their interests and activities, which included music, television, sports, and other activities. Facebook also allowed young people the chance to 'like' a range of things, such as groups, community campaigns, public figures, and products. Robyn shared: '*I've liked pages. To do with music that I'm into. Or cute sayings*'. As young people liked these things they were listed on their Facebook pages, giving others an overview of their interests. For example, Bec listed four inspirational people on her Facebook page, all of whom were photographers, revealing her interest in and love of photography. Young people often listed many of their likes and interests. For example, Eve had a total of 815 likes on her account, and Lily's account contained 1,157 likes.

Participants described how some Facebook users presented a version of themselves that others believed to be exaggerated or untruthful:

> *I'm undecided whether the internet lets people be who they truly are, or whether it lets people crate the 'ideal' of themselves as it lets them show only what they want - the good photos, the statuses about how great their lives are etc (Bec)*

Similarly, Courtney stated that:

> *they try to seem cool.. When in reality they are themselves, and it makes me feel like unfriending them, because i want the real person, and not the fake one... I have told them,. Last year a friend of mine confronted me because I deleted her, and I told her straight to her face, that the way she acted on Facebook, was nothing like the way she acted in reality, and that I didn't want to see the other side of her, because I didn't like it. We're no longer friends.*

In contrast to these perspectives on young people presenting different personalities online and offline, Lily saw this as a positive. She believed she was able to be herself more online than off through the website 'YouNow', from which she gained many Facebook friends: '*I feel I am a totally different person on younow than in real life… In real life I feel the need to fit in everyday and I mean I'm sure everyone does but in a way younow helps me to find myself again*'.

Young people were also able to reflect their identities through photographs: '*remembering the memories behind a photograph and just thinking "wow things have changed"*' (Courtney). A friend of Bec posted to her wall '*…I love all the memories we have together and the fact that most of them are preserved in a photograph somewhere*'. All 73 participants shared photos of themselves through their Facebook accounts. Photos were organised into albums numbering from one to 75. A majority of participants (45 of 73) shared between one and 10 albums. The total number of photos shared by individuals ranged from one to 651 photos. Twenty young people also shared videos, with the peak being 29. Photos were both uploaded by young people themselves and by their friends. When a friend uploaded a photo, they often tagged the participant as one of the people depicted. 'Tagging' a person on Facebook creates a link to that person's profile associated with the tagged post. Photos largely consisted of a combination of selfies, and shots with friends and family, and showed significant events in their lives, such as school carnivals, birthday parties, and school leavers events. Events such as Christmas were detailed by Facebook users through photo albums. For example, Bec posted 87 photos of Christmas festivities with her family. Photos of friends spending time together dominated the large number of photos shared by young people.

Sharing issues of importance

More than half of participants' profiles (56 per cent) demonstrated the everyday Facebook practice of highlighting social campaigns or charities. Through showing support for these campaigns, young people showed their Facebook friends what they considered to be important: '*properly advertise some important issues… and talk about real issues that we people should be aware of*' (Will). Participants saw these community campaigns as a positive facet of Facebook, as Will described: '*the positives are using social networking to advertise and confront certain issues such as Kony and charity foundations*'.

One ‘campaign’ that was seen on many participant pages was ‘Kony 2012’. Twenty-five young people demonstrated support for this campaign by posting comments, joining events on Facebook, and sharing links to the event for Facebook friends to connect to. Niko posted that he had purchased $250 of Kony items online, including posters, a bracelet and a t-shirt. Kandi uploaded a Kony image to her photo albums in support. Ruby posted a statement in support of the cause that sparked much debate among her Facebook friends, some in support and opposed.

Eight participants held a more negative view on the Kony campaign. For example, Bohdan wrote, ‘*Kony 2012 give it 2 weeks everyone will forget about it*’. Izzy liked a trending image that commented sarcastically on the Kony campaign using the words ‘*Share Kony video – I fixed africa*’, with an image of a boy in front of a computer. This image had 4,686 likes, 588 shares, and 117 comments. Sinead, too, commented on the Kony campaign in a negative way:

> *ENOUGH WITH KONY 2012!!*
> *facts:*
> 1) *this was HISTORY, 1970’s shitthey only say this now because things have changed socially between whites and blacks since 1970.*
> 2) *no one remembers kony from 1970 so theyre bringing it back*
> 3) *he was in hiding/dead since 2006*
> 4) *they;re using 70% of any donations on themselves.*
>
> *enough facts? lets move on now…*

Support for campaigns on health issues was evident on young people’s Facebook walls. Bec posted a link to a website raising awareness about male mental health and male prostate cancer. Aisha shared a photo from Reach Out Australia’s Facebook page containing a humorous cartoon picture with the caption ‘*Wise Words Wednesday: Tell someone you get their back*’. Maddie liked the Eating Disorder Awareness Australia page. Penny shared a link to a website aiming to raise money for a mother who had lost her child to cystic fibrosis, a condition Penny lives with. The girl who died was Penny’s friend. Penny also joined a group called ‘Wear Red for CHD Awareness’.

On mental health, Rachel and Izzy both made posts (see Figure 17, below) promoting Mental Health Awareness Week. Bec shared a link to a YouTube video addressing suicide and encouraging those who may be feeling suicidal to seek help. Other posts included:

Today, 17 teens will take their own lives due to bullying… Today is Self Harm Awareness Day! If someone ever needs to talk about ANYTHING I'm only an inbox away (Tess)

If you know someone who's depressed, please resolve never to ask them why. Depression isn't a straightforward response to a bad situation; depression just is, like the weather. Try to understand the blackness, lethargy, hopelessness, and loneliness they're going through. Be there for them when they come through the other side. It's hard to be a friend to someone who's depressed, but it is one of the kindest, noblest and best things you will ever do (Abby)

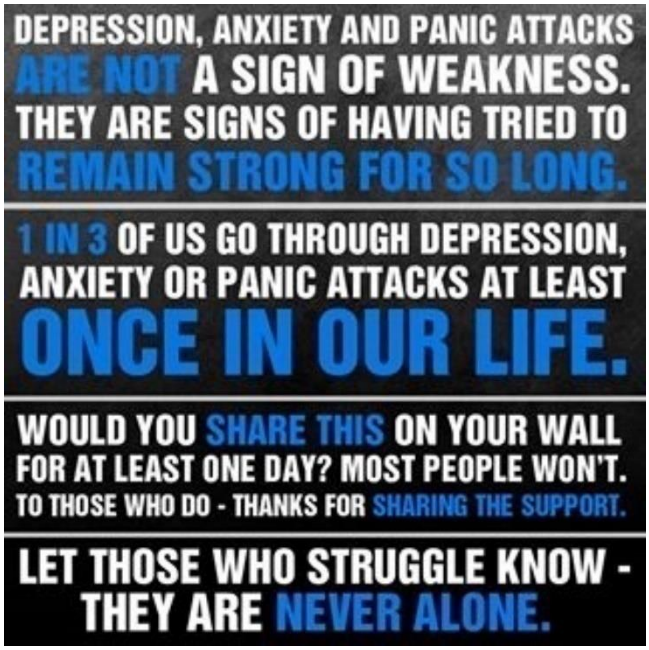


Figure 17: Image shared by Rachel and Izzy

Twelve of the participants openly supported marriage equality. Young people uploaded and shared images, and provided links to articles in support of a change to the law. Simon and Grace shared images from the page 'Wipeout Homophobia on Facebook'. The images Simon posted read '*Hate is far more of a choice than homosexuality will ever be*', and '*If only closed minds came with closed mouths*'. Oliver liked a link, as did 427 others, to a photo of two men kissing and the caption '*Like if you support gay pride*'. Abby posted the status: '*People that say gay people aren't normal. Can someone please tell me what normal is? Seriously theres no such fucking thing*'. Lauren shared a photo of a man protesting outside a church against homosexuals. The image showed people condemning his views, with one person pointing his

finger, another holding a sign saying '*Fuck this guy*', and two men standing close to the protester kissing in an embrace. Lauren also posted an image with the text: '*homosexuality was found in more than 450 species. Homophobia in only one. Which one is unnatural?*'. Further, Nicole, Emily, Daniel and Logan all posted images and links to articles on marriage equality. In addition, both Maddie and Ryan liked a photo in support of gay, lesbian and bisexual people.

Status updates were another way of expressing thoughts on marriage equality: '*I'm proud that the government has finally done something right and allowed gays to marry*' (Priya). This comment received 19 likes and sparked a 27 comment debate among her friends. Jess posted a status referencing homophobia, but in a comical way, stating: '*How many homophobes does it take to change a lightbulb? They don't. They're too afraid of change, even if it makes the world a brighter place*'. Ben posted the comment: '*Can't gay marriage just be accepted? On my God*', however, a friend sarcastically commented underneath: '*I am sure this status will make a big difference l o l*'.

Other social topics young people showed support for through posts and images included: animal welfare, the defence forces, deportation, road safety, and disabled people. Maddie posted a photo (see Figure 18, below) in support of the National Association of Injured and Disabled Workers.

Figure 18: Image posted by Maddie

Cancer was a health issue that young people showed empathy for. Mitchell, for example, listed himself as attending a World's Greatest Shave community event. Eve posted a status in support of a friend who was shaving her head in support of Shave for a Cure, and requested that others donate and support the cause. Alex shared this post on cancer:

> *Stupid cancer. We all want a new car, a new phone. A person who has cancer only wants one thing… to survive. I know that a lot of you "who think you're too cool" probably won't re-post this. But a very little amount of my friends will. Put this on your wall in honor of someone who died of cancer, survived, or who is fighting against it now.*

Sharing photos among friends was again evident on the topic of cancer. For example, Robyn liked a photo of a child with cancer with the caption '*LIKE if she's beautiful*'. This photo had received 7,935 likes, 128 comments, and 41 shares. Penny posted a photo of herself with a newly shaved head and a handwritten note saying, '*I DID IT FOR CANCER*' (see Figure 19, below).

Figure 19: Image posted by Penny

This generated 130 likes and supporting comments from friends. Penny also uploaded an image with the words: '*Disney should make a princess with no hair, that way little girls who have cancer can feel beautiful*'. Hannah shared a photo in support of those with cancer of a young girl looking at herself in the mirror and drawing hair onto her reflection. Sebastian

liked a photo of a father with his child suffering cancer captioned: '*I wish cancer never existed! Like if you do too*'. The photo had been liked 100,222 times.

In contrast to the many posts in support of campaigns and causes, four participants expressed negative views of this practice:

> *I really don't understand how making a secret girls only status is going to help breast cancer. If you really want to support it, donate or volunteer (Jess)*

> *IF YOU REALLY CARED ABOUT PEOPLE WITH CANCER YOU'D VISIT A HOSPITAL OR DONATE YOUR TIME INSTEAD OF TYPING FOR A FEW SECONDS (Sarah)*

> *its weird u see someone reposting something sad/controversial on an interesting topic yet I would bet u that half the people posting it wouldn't know a thing about the topic in the first place (Will)*

> *Well according to my Facebook page tonight:*
> *-because I ignored a picture, I'm going to hell*
> *-because I didn't like a photo, I support abuse*
> *-because I didn't like a status, I don't want to save a child dying of cancer*
> *-because I didn't share a photo, I'm going to die tomorrow*
> *You know what's sad? Is that you people believe liking a status or photo actually makes a difference in this world. Liking a status doesn't save people from dying of cancer. Sharing a photo doesn't feed a third world country. Facebook is a SOCIAL NETWORK. Not a charity foundation or an organisation promoting Human rights. It's great that some people want to raise awareness, I'm not against that. But whether a person 'likes' something on their newsfeed, or if they completely ignore it, it doesn't condemn them to Heaven or Hell, it doesn't save someone's life, it doesn't make a difference. Except you've now given yourself a false sense of self-satisfaction (Lauren)*

In addition to the practice of supporting campaigns and causes, young people also posted information or warnings that they saw as important to share. For example, Alex posted a warning message about 'a code' that posted messages on people's Facebook accounts:

> *The code that posts those videos is still around on Facebook and I don't know how it's activated. Be careful when clicking links or when you're on fan pages that require you to like them etc.*

Izzy and Robyn both shared warning messages about the danger of child abductors in their areas. These were copied messages and read,

> *ALERT the same person who tried to abduct my niece after she got off the school bus yesterday tried to abduct an old lady at the jetty last night. He had her half in the car before a passerby helped her escape. PLEASE WARN YOUR CHILDREN AND BE VIGILANT!*
> *-This Is A Re-Share For People That Live ******. As She Said, Be Vigilant, And DONT Go Anywhere Alone Near The ****** Area!- (Izzy)*

> *The police have alerted people to not go anywhere alone around ****** st ****** and ******. There have been 6 incidents in the past week with children being dragged into cars or being chased. There are 2 men, an older one in his late 50s and a younger man about 20. It has been the same two men every time. The man appears to have a walking stick but can run. Please copy and paste this to warn everyone. (Robyn)*

Tess shared a post which was about a girl who had gone missing and how people were rallying to help find her:

> *It's lovely that so many people care about that girl that is missing and there is even groups about trying to find her and I hope she does show up soon. It just makes you wonder like if I ever went missing would people care that much for me (Tess)*
>
> > *I don't know you, but if you went missing I would (friend of Tess)*
> >
> > *I put it on tumblr. Hopefully she's be found (friend of Tess)*
> >
> > *I have people on tumblr from Adelaide who are older. So fingers crossed they might of noticed her somewhere. (friend of Tess)*

In another example of sharing local news, Bec liked a link from the Queensland Police Service, making it appear on her wall and in all her friends' newsfeeds. The link detailed an incident on the Bruce Highway involving two people, a stolen vehicle, and an altercation with police officers.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the everyday experiences of young people on Facebook, and has demonstrated that young people participate in practices such as: being visible and accessible to friends; managing accounts, connections and content; connecting with others; participating in group trends; showing their sense of self; and sharing issues of importance. These are common practices among young people, and provide a context for their engagement with risks online, which is the focus of the next two chapters.

In the next findings chapter, I move to a focus on risk and show that young people 'know' and 'unknow' risk on Facebook. The third and final findings chapter will then discuss how young people engage with risk through 'making' and 'taking' risks.

Chapter Six: Young People Knowing and Unknowing Risks on Facebook

The first findings chapter showed young people's everyday practices on Facebook. These practices are the context in which young people understand and engage with risk, which is the focus of this second findings chapter. The findings of this research show that young people 'know' and 'unknow' risks on Facebook. They demonstrated that they 'know' risks by recognising them. Young people show how they 'unknow' risks by reframing and normalising them. 'Unknow' is used in this thesis to mean to 'undo the process of knowing' (Wiktionary 2019) and 'to cease to know' (Merriam-Webster 2019). Risks that are described from adult-centric perspectives are reframed and normalised by young people, demonstrating that they are *actively* 'unknowing' them. These findings show how notions of risks are created through the social interactions and practices of young people on Facebook.

As with the first findings chapter, extracts are presented verbatim to retain the authenticity and meaning of their responses, and each participant and their friends have been given pseudonyms to ensure they are not identifiable. Following this chapter, a third chapter concludes the presentation of findings, focusing on how young people engage with risk through practices of 'making' and 'taking' risks.

Recognising risks

The Facebook environment is a domain in which risky behaviour can occur. It is clear that it is a medium that affords risk taking; yet also affords risk management. For example, Facebook settings allow young people to make decisions on their Facebook use such as the privacy of their accounts, which can be modified to allow profiles to be private to friends only or publicly accessible to all Facebook users. Facebook settings also afford risk taking and risk management through the options to communicate through private chats or through Facebook walls which are able to be seen by others on Facebook. Through the affordances of Facebook, young people are able to show that they can recognise risks and respond to risks.

Controlling privacy risks

Young people in this research showed that they know risks on Facebook by demonstrating that they recognise privacy risks specifically. Privacy was something young people felt they could control through decisions about the privacy of their profiles. Most participants chose to have a private profile, but six had open profiles, meaning that as a non-friend and then as a friend of the participant, the information I was able to view did not change. Three participants chose to have some privacy measures in place, meaning that a non-friend could view some information on their profiles but not all of it. The major element of their Facebook profiles that was kept private was their timeline, meaning that all wall posts and conversations with their friends were not accessible by non-friends.

Most young people (64 of 73) chose to keep a private profile, so their information and conversations with friends were hidden from the general public. An example of information viewable on a Facebook profile set to private by a non-friend can be seen in Figure 20, below.

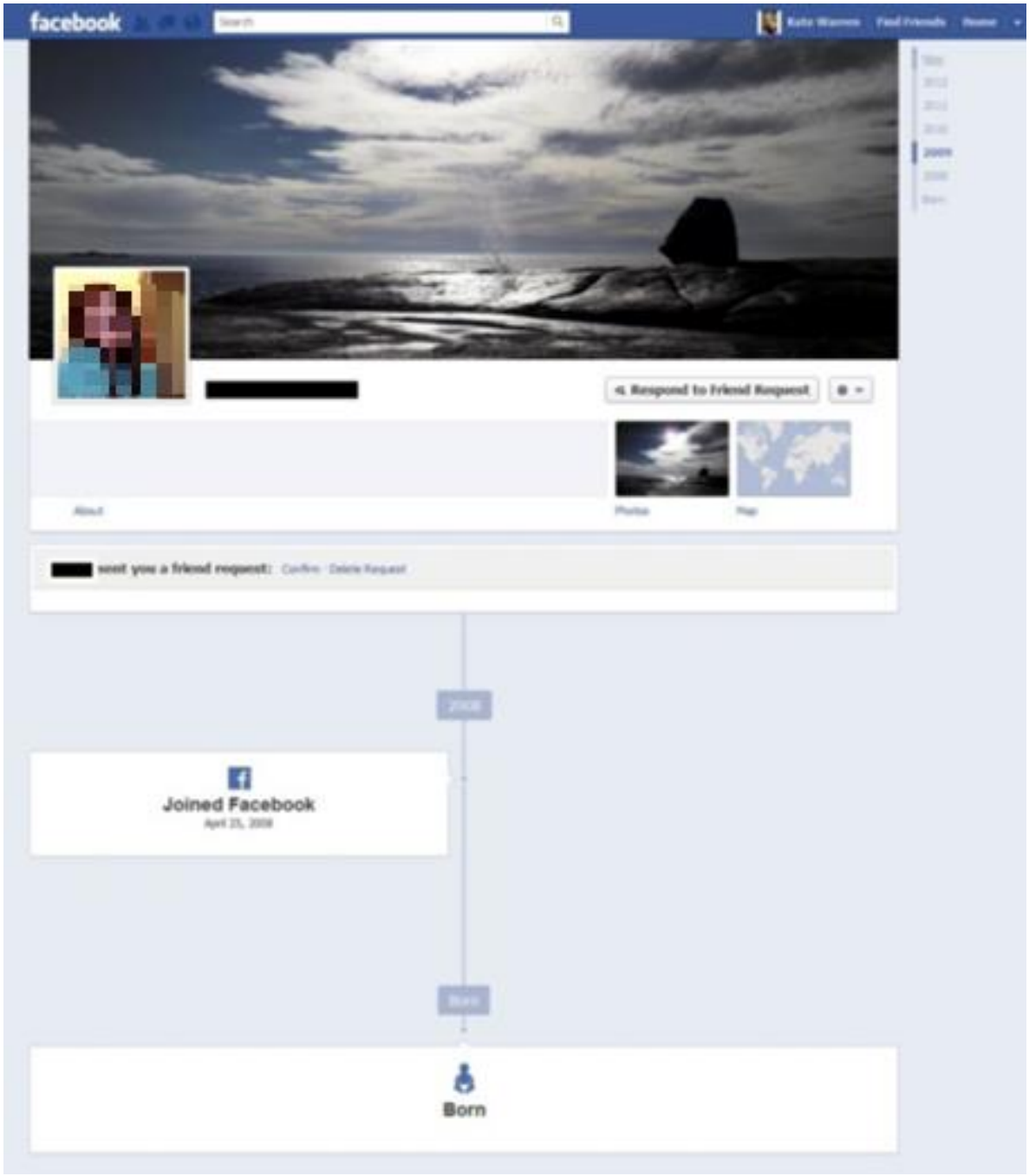


Figure 20: The view of a private Facebook profile by a non-friend

As participants who chose to maintain a private profile put it:

> *i dont share my wall, friends or photos with people i havnt confirmed as friends, or even people with mutual friends they can only see my name in my info and my current town, date and month of my birth (Bec)*

> *profile is private enough, so that people who know me can figure out who I am, but those who don't know me, haven't got a way to recognise me, and I've got it so that noone knows where i go to school, who isn't my friend on here, and i only accept people i know/am helping (Courtney)*

Reasons to keep profiles private included safety and maintaining privacy from potential employers:

> *Mine is private enough that I cannot be searched. For safety reasons.*
> *Like in the past my page was public but things happened and I have to share minimal information.*
> *My former step dad is a stalker and he was trying to get information for dirt ect . And my father who disowned me kept trying to track me down. Things like that. (Robyn)*

> *Sure, it's true that employers may indeed search facebook while selecting candidates, and for many people, it's possibly true that there are little things they may not want potential employers to see. Privacy settings are there for a reason, and I think utilising them is incredibly important. (Nicole)*

Another profile privacy consideration was passwords. Alex showed his awareness of keeping his password private through a conversation with a friend on his Facebook wall:

> *Dude u stuff up ur password because u type like retardedly fast and then u restart it laptop open it, and retype ur password retardedly fast. (friend of Alex)*

> > *So true :D but I usually get my password first go, that's the point of having a password like that – you type it fast and then nobody knows what it is even if they watch (Alex)*

In contrast, Abby did not feel the need to keep her password to herself, and instead chose to share it with some of her friends. This was done with a complete trust of the friends chosen, and with a consideration of the potential safety benefits of allowing people to access her information if they needed to:

> *3 People know my password, these people I trust with everything I have*
> *I believe its good that at least one person knows your password in case you get in any trouble or anything like that so someone could check it and know whats been happening with you c: (Abby)*

Maddie highlighted how Facebook settings could be altered to allow content to be shared with 'friends of friends'. Maddie chose to use this feature on some of her posts: '*some things I have set for friends of friends to see… Like photos friends are tagged in… Or statusses friends are tagged in*'. Like Maddie, Nicole explained how, within her friends list on Facebook, she used her privacy controls to allow some friends to see more and some less than others:

> *Basically, I use the option of being fully visible to all of my friends, minus the ones I select. No one outside of my added friends can see any of my content. People that can't see . whom I restrict certain photos, photo albums, or statuses from include 'people' that are actually organisations (considering I don't know who actually accesses the page), people who I've worked for, and people who I know, but haven't had a great amount of personal interaction with.*

Participants spoke of Facebook settings as being a helpful tool to increase safety. For example, Abby stated: '*If you use the proper saftey and privacy settings... Like making all your posts to 'Just friends' and not adding/talking to people who you don't know*'. As Lily put it: '*It's only safe it you make it to me again it's your choice… Facebook has security settings its there for a reason*'. They demonstrated through their comments that they felt a clear sense of control over their privacy settings. This was true for both male and female participants. This sense of control was demonstrated more often by those aged 16 and 17 years old, with the addition of two 15-year-olds. For example:

> *when it comes to decisions like that [choosing privacy settings], that dont openly involve the general public, i evaluate all the options, and outcomes thereof, and decide for myself what would be the best option. (Lucas)*

> *I'm glad that I can decide what privacy settings I want and I can decide what I want to do. (Robyn)*

> *you can choose your friends and discard the ones whom you dislike… if you dont like someone you can change your settings so that they cant add you or send a request and if you ever feel uncomfortable with some1 you can de friend them and also you can choose who you want to be friends with (Marko)*

Although privacy risks were recognised by young people, updating or modifying those settings was not of high importance to interview participants. Will, a high school student from Brisbane, Queensland, who had been on Facebook since 2009, stated that privacy settings were '*not really something i thought about too much to be honest*'. His attitude to privacy was common among the participants interviewed. When asked about how often they modified their privacy settings, participants mostly responded that they were relaxed about them, and that this was not a regular consideration. For example, Lily said: *'I look at my settings when I can once a year… You know change the info change my passwords*'.

Three participants who regularly monitored their privacy settings were the exception. Bec stated: '*i actually am quite paranoid and look at it about once a week*'. Sinead described how she regularly checked her settings, too: '*I read about it in settings. When it comes to privacy, i dont really trust many people… quite regually, maybe once every 3 weeks*'. Courtney also stated:

> *I look at them once a week, and go over them, make sure nothing's changed, because i've noticed a few times, where the settings reset to something different, which is the automatic ones, but after i changed them so all my settings are custom, i don't notice any new changes.*

Decisions on disclosing personal information

Privacy was also considered with regard to disclosing personal information. As Sinead commented: '*I'd rather die then let people i dont know read all about me and where i live, my school. Etc and even in the "infomation" part, i only have that i am in a relationship*'. Sinead is a young female whose comment demonstrates a conscious choice to limit the

amount of information shared with Facebook friends. Her profile showed that she connected with just 14 friends on Facebook, which was far fewer than the mean number of friends that participants had (522). In addition to this, Sinead shared with these 14 friends limited information about herself. Other participants, both male and female, shared their thoughts on disclosing personal information on Facebook demonstrating an awareness of risks to privacy:

> *People who you don't know can access your personal information and see your posts of what you are doing, some could be dangerous people (Abby)*

> *it's your choice to out what you want on here its something you can control , you can control wether to put your social or private life on here… I feel I'm responsible to make my own decisions (Lily)*

Young people clearly recognised risks regarding the personal information they shared on Facebook. Just under half of interview participants (44 per cent) gave thought to the amount of personal information they shared on their Facebook profiles, with identifying details often omitted. Georgina advised people to '*use common sense, if you give out your age, address, phone number, etc, to someone you JUST MET, chances are you're going to have a bad time*', and Niko commented that: '*You wouldn't just pour out your life story to a stranger in real life so why do it online?*'. Likewise, Robyn suggested:

> *letting minimal information out don't add random people all of that stuff . I would probably say that there Are a few creeps out there and to be careful , don't give out too much personal details because you don't want any stalked and if you ever feel uncomfortable talk to someone.*

In practice, commonly provided personal information included name, gender, birth date, hometown, and number of friends. Other identifying information, such as schools, workplaces, email addresses, mobile numbers and relationship status were also sometimes seen. Information less frequently shared included Skype and Windows Live Messenger details, as well as languages spoken, and religious and political views. Decisions were also made by young people about sharing who they connected with on Facebook. Four participants, Jacob, Joel, Bohdan, and Katharine had set their profile to not allow their friends list to be viewed. During the time Courtney was a participant, she chose to change her friends list from public to private, meaning that even as a friend of hers I was not able to view it.

Privacy was also considered in relation to the content shared on participants' individual profiles. Participants described the type of information they shared on their own Facebook walls as being everyday, conversational content. For example, Courtney stated: *'i don't share much information, I post a lot of song lyrics, and say for example, what i got for my birthday, but not much other than that*'. Some participants shared the type of content they would not put up on their profile:

> *address, phone number, photos that I didn't take, stuff that isn't true... stuff I don't like (Georgina)*

> *i wouldnt share photos of my house or school, but i would of my pets and family (Sinead)*

Bec described limiting personal information in order to feel safe in relation to communicating with me as the researcher, which could be applied to any Facebook friend:

> *you could be a predator. but the difference is i dont have a connection to you, i havnt shared secrets or pictures of my address of phone number. i emailed you with an email address that isnt my main one but i have nothing to lose or nothing to blackmail me with though which is what happens i could just walk away from this conversation and not be worse off.*

Both male and female participants projected false details about themselves on Facebook. It appeared that this was done to protect true personal information, and to be comical. Profile names were sometimes altered. For example, Noah, while a participant, changed his profile name to a completely different one, and then changed it back. Bohdan also changed his profile name to incorporate his nickname. Being comical, Bobbi-Jo claimed to have attended '*Death Weapon Meister Academy*', and listed her employer as '*Galactic League of extra-terrestrial exploration starship ranger corp*'. Izzy described how she used false information on Facebook:

> *I also have random stuff in my info page, so i have people who aren't really my family listed as my family. Under mobile phone and address and those i have 'ask for speedy's phone number' (speedy is my nickname) so i don't givbe that info out, if people want it they can ask me and i will decide. Even when you have to say your language i have just clicked a whole heap and for my school i*

> *said i went to Hogwarts. Well obviously i am having a laugh, but seriously why is it important anyway? I think the only thing i have on that is for real is me being female and the city i live in.*

Within Facebook conversations, too, it was evident that young people considered the privacy of personal details. While requesting information from Facebook friends, young people often asked for the information to be sent through private channels, such as the inbox:

> *Inbox me your mobile numbers, no contacts! I will text you. ☺(Ben)*

> *Hey Ebony, Inbox me your skype, just noticed that I don't have yours (friend of Ebony)*

Information given through photos was also a consideration for the 16-year-olds. One participant, Courtney, detailed how, before posting photos of other people, she would ask for permission: '*I use Facebook for Photo's as well, but I make sure that they are photo's that people are happy to be shared… i mean i ask permission of others, in person, before i post a photo of them*'. Similarly, Niko also thought about others when choosing which photos to upload to Facebook: '*I usually put up display pictures of myself I would not put up pictures of other people as that defaces there right of privacy on the internet and how they share to put up there face*'. Two friends of Jess requested that Jess upload some photos, but they also requested she put them up on Facebook in a private album. They wrote on her wall: '*could you please upload the photos as soon as you can lovely? Xx… on private!!*'; and '*photos up! I'm thinking private album*'.

Unlike Courtney and Niko, Nicole felt that it was acceptable for people to post photos of whomever they pleased, without the need to ask permission or consider others' privacy. Nicole spoke positively about photos being uploaded, and described happily uncovering photos of herself online: '*I love the photo sharing ability, for starters. I've been to huge events, music concerts, festivals, huge scout camps (in excess of 40,000 people) and have been able to come back, and find photos of myself and other friends which I would never have found without facebook. This in turn allows me to connect with those people from overseas, or interstate, often through them being tagged in photos I've found*'. Bobbi-Jo was also unconcerned about sharing pictures of others, uploading a photo of friends when they were younger with the caption: '*so young and cute :D aha next time check your usbs before giving them to me ;)*'.

In some cases, photos were altered by the 15- and 16-year-olds to hide personal information. For example, Emily uploaded a screenshot of mail to send to friends on which she had blocked out their actual addresses. In another example, a friend of Penny posted a picture of her bank card, but blurred her card number in the image before sharing. Bohdan uploaded a screenshot (see Figure 21, below) of a conversation between two girls. Their names were blacked out to protect their identity, although their profile pictures were left visible.

Figure 21: Screenshot shared by Bohdan with profile names blacked out

While young people showed awareness of privacy risks online, in practice, they often shared their personal information freely. There appeared to be no consequences for doing so. Information including mobile numbers, Skype names, and Tumblr URLs were provided openly on young people's pages through conversations. Evidence of sharing personal details through conversations with Facebook friends was seen on 32 per cent of participants' Facebook pages. These participants were predominantly female 15- and 16-year-olds, with one 18-year-old female and one 16-year-old male sharing their mobile numbers freely.

Open requests were made by two participants asking for their friends' Skype names. Bohdan requested contacts from his friends through a status update: '*Comment skype names?*'. Seven of his Facebook friends proceeded to give Bohdan their contact details. Hannah also requested Skype names and Tumblr URLs, and eleven of her friends willingly shared their details. Skype names were often provided openly by participants. For example, Rachel posted: '*If you want to add me on skype my name is r******* and on snapchat it's s******'.

Penny uploaded a photo of herself and a friend with their phone numbers written on their hands. Also, participants willingly and openly shared their mobile numbers on their Facebook wall through status updates, such as:

> *Got my phone back… Text me? 04** *** *** (Hannah)*
>
> *txt me C: 04** *** *** (Ryan)*
>
> *Someone call me, I'm going insane: 04** *** *** (Priya)*

Some young people (15 per cent) shared their personal mobile number on public Facebook pages created to learn friends' mobile numbers. For example, Michelle posted her mobile phone number twice to a public event page set up by Facebook friends asking for their friends' phone numbers. Joel also posted his mobile number to a page called '*Need Numbers, deleted all data on my phone :O*', and Robyn, too, joined a page titled '*need numbers. <3*', along with 60 other people.

The disclosure of young people's locations was also evident in the data. This was done through conversations, the act of tagging through the maps feature, and on one occasion through an uploaded image.

Jordan, a young male from Tasmania, attends college and has 1,057 friends on Facebook. Jordan gave out directions to his house in a conversation with a friend which was viewable by others,

> *If you turn off the highway at that overpass (The exit after the ****** roundabout I'm pretty sure) you don't have to make any turns. One road the whole way ha. Called ****** Rd. MY house is about 25 minutes from there, ****** house with a ****** extension on the right hand side downhill and off a gravel road. Front paddock has a ****** fence*

Jordan, like some other participants, freely provided his Facebook friends with information regarding his home address or friends' addresses. The home addresses of more than one in ten young people were discoverable on their Facebook pages. Sometimes this was clearly intentional, often directed at one person, but was still written publicly on the wall where others could view it.

At other times when addresses were accessible, the exact locations may not have been intentionally given. For example, one participant posted a photo of a fine (see Figure 22, below) he had received in the mail. Whether knowingly or not, this participant shared his full name and address.

Figure 22: Participant openly sharing his full name and address on Facebook

Through Facebook's maps feature, young people provided their locations to their Facebook friends. Tags were often made in public spaces, such as shopping centres or beaches. Sometimes, though, tags were placed at more personal locations, such as schools and homes. Eight young people tagged themselves at their homes (see Figure 23, below, for example). Nathan tagged himself at his '*comfy bed*'. Similarly, Oliver and Hannah tagged themselves on their beds, and in the process showed their Facebook friends the location of their houses. Eve's Facebook account also contained screenshots of her house location under the legend '*Eve's crib*'. Two of the eight who tagged home locations tagged themselves at other people's homes, and thus revealed those locations. There were no negative consequences for the young people who chose to share their locations. This findings was specific to the participants in this research, however, the capacity to ascertain the outcomes in more detail was not within the scope of the study and therefore unable to be generalised.

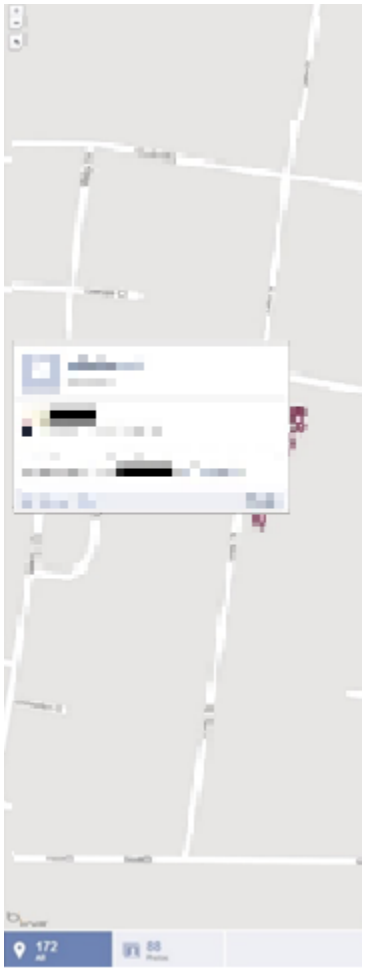


Figure 23: Screenshot of Abby tagging herself at her home address

Public posts and private chats

Young people demonstrated that they know risk regarding their communications on Facebook. This was particularly spoken about by the female participants. It was highlighted how methods of communication were chosen depending on the nature of the conversation, with consideration of who could view the conversation. Participants were aware of the public nature of writing on people's Facebook walls, as Lucas commented: *'wall posts are visible to everyone and chat is private*'.

Conversations on Facebook walls were described as less personal and more casual in nature, and therefore as not requiring of a high level of privacy. As Abby noted: '*Wallposts are for more open/funny/general posts*'. The chat feature on Facebook was described by participants as giving them more privacy: '*inboxes for me are more personal conversations or catch ups*'

(Abby). This chat feature was chosen by participants in order to keep the conversation between those involved. For example, Robyn stated: '*I consider my way more private . I mainly speak to people via inboxes because I don't like people seeing my conversations*'. When young people were making plans with friends online, they also chose to use the chat feature. For example: '*When I make plans I'll do chat*' (Will).

This means of young people making privacy decisions was also seen in communications between young people. Just under half of participants (44 per cent) engaged in conversations which began publicly but moved to more private spaces. For example:

> *Planning on running away and never coming back. Sounds good to me! (Abby)*
>
> *Why x (friend of Abby)*
>
> *I hate it here x (Abby)*
>
> *But why x (friend of Abby)*
>
> *Reasons I aint posting on my status x (Abby)*
>
> *Inbox me x (friend of Abby)*
>
> *Ok x (Abby)*

Sinead also expressed the view that chats or emails were more private than wall posts, but she acknowledged that these 'private' conversations could be '*copy and pasted*'. The motives to copy and paste a conversation were, according to Sinead: '*to show how stupidly funny your friends are (my reason) to get back at someone and to spread rumours*'. Sinead described this copy and paste tactic as being used often: '*I hear about it at school a lot*'. She described the process:

> *With wallposts; all people on your friends account can see what you posted, with inboxing, it is the same as chat. Just moved a little and the chats re harder to 'copy and paste if someone wants the conversation; you need to copy and paste the chat. And inboxing is easier to do because it has time/date and names. chat; is just words*

Evidence of private conversations being screenshotted and shared between friends was found among 26 per cent of participants. For example, Robyn uploaded a screenshot of a conversation she had had with a friend on Facebook and a screenshot of a text message conversation. In another example, Bobbi-Jo was tagged in a photo a friend had taken of the computer screen showing a chat conversation.

Abby's Facebook page showed an example of how private inboxes could be shared among friends. Abby posted the status: '*You're perfect. You have everything you want. And now this. When will you learn to stop?*'. The person who was the subject of this status was not identified, but it was revealed in the comments that followed that the subject knew it was about her:

> *I read your inboxes between you and cassie, I know who this is about (friend of Abby)*
>
> > *Cool as, if you have anything to ask me why don't you just inbox me and ask instead of just reading my inboxes with other people. (Abby)*
> >
> > *I went on cassies account for lolz. And btw I don't have everything I want. (friend of Abby)*
> >
> > *And you chose to read them for lolz too? And k. (Abby)*
> >
> > *Abby I'm sick of this, you actually think my life is perfect and I can get any guy I want? No it isn't, by now you should know that's not true, after everything I have told you. (friend of Abby)*
> >
> > *Everything you have told me? Seriously we haven't had a close talk in over a year. Things change, people change. (Abby)*
> >
> > *You're actually pissing me off so much, I haven't done anything wrong, seriously, get over it Abby, you can at least not bitch to my best friend. K thanks. (friend of Abby)*
> >
> > *Just fucking stop (Abby)*

Supporting the emotional well-being of others

Young people showed that they 'know' risk through recognising it in relation to the emotional well-being of others on Facebook. Status updates were met with support through likes by friends, comments and offers to talk more. A third of participants' Facebook pages (32 per cent) showed such posts. For example:

> *I say im unattractive. Not because im looking for attention or compliments, but because that's truly how I feel. I don't believe that I am attractive because I can see everything you don't. I see how my stomach looks when im standing with no shirt on. I see my face under the make up. I see every little flaw about myself, even if you can't. I say im not attractive because id be lying if I said I was.. (Ryan)*
>
> > *You say you can see all these things that we can't.. that's funny cos I can see a lot of things YOU cant.. I see the way people want to be around you, the way they smile when you come into a room, I see how you befriended a young girl who often doesn't have many people willing to stand by her side, I listened to you tell a story of things past that must have been so tough without an inch of self pity….. I say these things shine through and make you beautiful… what a shame you cant see you the way others see you! (friend of Ryan)*
>
> *I'm so fucking over this. I'm sick of it all. I hate feeling like this. I can't take it anymore. (Lauren)*
>
> > *I'm here for you babe (friend of Lauren)*
> >
> > *Always an inbox away (friend of Lauren)*
> >
> > *Whats wrong? (friend of Lauren)*
> >
> > *Inbox me (friend of Lauren)*

Young people also directly commented on their friends' walls. These posts, examples below, showed care and encouragement through positive statements:

> *You think your not beautiful, yeah? You believe not one single guy would want you, right? Ohh and that because your not 'perfect' or 'popular' you don't belong in this society, agreed? Well your wrong. beauty and popularity isn't something you earn or can just make you way into, its self respect and knowing your gorgeous even if that one person finds it funny to put you down. Life is too short to stumble on the little things, stay strong, smile and hold all confidence in yourself because honestly who would you rather be? (friend of Abby)*

> *Aw Priya, you're such a beautiful girl. You're nice, caring & trusting and you shouldn't let anyone get you down. Stick up for yourself and stop worrying about what people think of you (friend of Priya)*

Care was also demonstrated through young people offering their assistance to their friends if needed:

> *Penny you are so brave you have been through so much if there is anything I can do for u just let me know and I would be glad to help (friend of Penny)*

> *Hey lovely, if you ever want to talk about anything, im here for you (friend of Sarah)*

In addition to posts, young people used the 'like' button to support their friends' emotional well-being. All 73 participants received likes and gave likes to their Facebook friends. Ryan posted a long message on his Facebook wall beginning with '*Novel Alert*' and ending with '*I'm making it happen. for you dad. RIP*' about his dad passing away and Ryan's dreams and goals for his own life. This post generated 110 likes from his Facebook friends. In another example, Abby posted: '*So apparently I'm never nice to anyone.. /: Like if you think I'm nice?*'. Abby received 47 likes. Likes were also seen to express understanding. For example, Sarah commented on parents separating: '*so jealous of people who's parents are still together and can be in the same room together for more than a minute without arguing*'. Her comment received 18 likes from friends, as well as comments in agreement.

Some young people reflected grief and loss through their comments on Facebook. At times, young people made open, reflective statements, not obviously directed at any other person, but showing their care for others. For example, Leah posted: '*2011 was a memory packed year! Too all those who lost a loved one, I hope you can find peace in 2012*'. At other times

the support was more direct. For example, it was apparent that Yvette's uncle had died, and her Facebook friends posted messages of support on her wall. Yvette received comments such as: '*I hope you and your family are okay ☹ call me or text me whenever you want okay xx*'; '*I love you and I'm here for you whenever you like*'; and '*here if you need me love, I'm sorry xo*'.

Young people also supported others emotional well-being in relation to self-harm and suicide. Tess posted an update demonstrating proactive support to anyone who might be thinking of or engaging in self-harm or suicide:

> *Thinking about suicide/self-harming? First of all I want you to know that life is not easy. Every day is an unpredictable challenge. Some days it can be difficult to simply get out of bed in the morning. To face reality and put on that smile. But I want you to know that your smile is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen, I might not personally know you but you truly are beautiful never forget that, even through the toughest times, you are incredible. You really are. So smile more often. You have so many reasons to. You won't always be perfect, neither will I. Nobody has it easy, everybody has issues, and sometimes you might feel like giving up but I don't want you to, I want you to stay strong, not only for me or your family but for yourself. Your life has only begun don't check out so early, stick around, things do get better, it's not always going to be a shit ride, someday it will be perfect, someday your going to smile and think 'Life is truly beautiful" and your going to mean it. You just have to stay around to see for yourself.*

Friends of Izzy supported her when she posted about her own self harming,

> *I haven't cut in around 5 months.. Mum, It is all for you.*
> *I miss you and love you~ (Izzy)*
>
> *And for yourself sweetie. (friend of Izzy).*
>
> *Im always here if u need someone. X (friend of Izzy)*
>
> *Very proud of you you get front seat for one week (friend of Izzy)*
>
> *Good on you Izzy. I'm proud of you too. (friend of Izzy)*

> *Good on yah sweetheart, mum would be proud of you as I am. (friend of Izzy)*

In a reactive way, Hannah posted a screenshot of a young girl's Tumblr page, captioned '*guys please help me stop her from suicide*'. The screenshot showed a note from the girl saying: '*Can you ask your followers to go to my ask box and tell me why shouldn't I kill myself*'. Hannah also posted the status:

> *I go on tumblr and see all this anon of people cutting and committing suicide. Its so sad to know that people in this world can say "go kill yourself" "everyone hates you" and bring others to the point that they harm themselves as a way of getting out of the pain, I have had suicidal thoughts, I bet some of you readingthis have, I have cut myself, I bet some of you have too, but please if you know someone who is depressed or self harming or you are, just know you are special, you are beautiful and nobody but yourself can change you, if you don't believe in yourself, others cant either.*

One participant, Bec, spoke of how social media provided a sense of community for young people. She mentioned how a friend had received help through social media: '*a boy in my year posted a suicide note on facebook and suddenly everyone rallied around him and supported him*'. Bec also spoke of how young people use Tumblr to express themselves and receive support, and how young people can feel safe and supported online, which helps them to share their experiences and receive support from others:

> *they would talk and share experiences and bond over those and you'd get the occassional suicide note and people would send messages of support and often someone would recognizr the person in the picture and call someone and it has actually saved lives and it feels great to know that you are a part of that and that people on the internet whom you have never met or talked to have cared so much to help save lives people also make 'secret' videos, about experiences of abuse and self harm etc, and its just beautiful. everyone cries watching them. but it gives others the confidence to come forward and even open up to their friends in real life about experiences like that yeah, its really good. people could just be themselves and not be judged for it and for alot of people the*

> *internet is the only place they can do that… its just.. such a welcoming place to be*

While talking with me during an interview, Bec was also communicating with another young person online and trying to offer some support:

> *i just logged on then and i found a suicide note so now im tring to talk to this girl. she had a link to her facebook on her page so i added her and am talking to her… people dont realise how prevailant depression and suicide and self harm is amongst young people… and i reallllly think without the internet the figure could be alot highter*

In contrast to most young people who demonstrated support for those in need, Jacob posted: '*your self pity isn't helping you, it is what it is, your arent achieving anything by feeling sorry for yourself, if you have a problem then do something about it*'.

Opposing bullying through supporting friends

Young people recognised the risks of bullying, which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, and showed a clear recognition of the risks of bullying through opposing this form of emotional violence by supporting friends. Young people who had been bullied online shared the comments they had received with their Facebook friends. They did this by screenshotting the comments and posting them to their Facebook pages. The sharing of these instances of bullying was met with supportive comments from friends.

Hannah, who had experienced bullying online, posted a screenshot of the bullying comments she had received. Friends rallied around Hannah with supportive comments, such as: '*Don't listen to them Hannah*'; '*people do want you around trust me. a lot of people love you… im always here if you need me*'; '*that's so mean, I actually hate that person*'; and '*Wow, I bet they feel really tough. You know telling someone to kill themselves, over anonymous, on the Internet. Because clearly they don't have the balls to come off anon, yet alone say it to your face*'. When Hannah received a second bullying message online, she again screenshotted and shared it with her Facebook friends. Friends again wrote supportive comments under the images on Hannah's wall, with one friend writing: '*this anon has gone far enough. It sickens*

me that they could be this low. I really suggest turning anon off'. Hannah then received seven additional bullying messages. Again, friends supported her through comments: '*don't listen to em, just hold your head up high, don't sink to their level, just ignore it all we love you Hannah*'.

Like Hannah, Priya also experienced online bullying. After sharing the comments, friends of Priya came to support her through making 34 comments, among which were:

> *Wow… That's really low, no person has the right to tell another person to go die, whoever this is they are really low*
>
> *Don't ever let someone make you feel bad for who you are because you are a wonderful person*
>
> *People hiding under the banner of 'anonymous' are just cowards, and most usually say the shittiest things – it's rare that people would hide who they are if saying something really nice right? You shouldn't use things life formspring/whatever this is, it never ends well. And get rid of the toxic people out of your life! Even it its as little as deleting them off your facebook. They're all just not worth it. Just my words of advice*

Two participants, again female, publicly opposed bullying and supported school friends who had been bullied. Abby wrote a status update about her dislike of bullying:

> *Over this fucking bullying shit. It all your pathetic excuse of making yourself seem so perfect. Well guess what. You're not perfect. Noone is perfect. There's no such thing. This shit has gotten so bad that most friendships get ruined these days from it. It's like no one can be themselves without being bullied. It's so pathetic and I'm over seeing it.*

In the comment thread under this status, Abby revealed that she had defended someone who was being bullied that day at school. Tess also posted a status urging people to stop cyber-bullying and ease up on one student that attended her school:

> *all this shit is going beyond a joke, this is how kids kill themselves with cyber-bullying gang ups like this tonight. If Mr ****** comes into class one day and says " ____" took their life last night due to cyber-bullying and some of those*

> *people who pushed the kid over the edge are from ****** I would feel ashamed to know them and go to the same school as them!*

Twenty-four friends liked Tess's status, and it sparked a chain of 20 comments through which it was revealed that the person was the target of cyber-bullying and that they had deleted their Facebook account.

Reframing risks

Insignificance of fighting

Young people reframed risks in relation to name calling and belittling behaviour through fighting – this behaviour will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter. The risk of getting involved in fighting on Facebook was identified by 63 per cent of interview participants. Fighting was identified most by 15- and 16-year-olds, and was identified by male and female participants equally. Many participants had witnessed some form of fighting on Facebook or, as Bec described it, '*teenage drama*'. Most participants highlighted that arguments seen on Facebook often remained online and had little effect on other aspects of young people's lives. As Michael commented: '*the next day usually you'll just act like nothing happened*'; and Bec explained: '*it never really escalates past the status*'. The descriptions of fighting given by young people showed that they regarded this behaviour as insignificant.

Young people described fighting on Facebook as being not too serious. Yvette highlighted that there could be cases of misinterpretation:

> *Sometimes you see people writing nasty things. Or not even that maybe someone has misinterpreted what another person has said and then someone else will comment back and then it goes from there. Sometimes people get a bit rowdy. Nothing too major though.*

Hannah made the comparison between fighting on Facebook and fighting at school, and highlighted the shifting dynamics of high school friendships:

> *It's stupid. And mostly those people are friends again the next week. Well I guess the person would feel bad. I would a little I reckon. But then I'd just write something back and people would back me up. That's how it works. People take sides. I think it's just people being bored. Yeh maybe it was just that I was younger or maybe it was because there was no facebook, but people just used to say those things at school, or write it on the tables or the toilet door maybe. And then others would back it up or argue it. People would take sides, and then be best friends again a few days later. It's just how it goes. Yeh it's happened. But it's just stupid bitchy stuff. It doesn't matter really. Well cause it's not going to last. Cause like I said people will be nice again soon enough*

Unlike most participants, Sinead described this behaviour more seriously:

> *Sometimes others get involved and many friends are lost. With my old school, I had people on facebook but so many things got out of hand that it was ruining everyone; relationships to friendships, even some teachers had commotion on facebook. It rarely ever gets resolved. Nowadays, people either b[i]tch about whoever the person is, or they block them and never speak again.*

'Hacking' for fun

The term 'hacking' had been reframed by young people on Facebook. Young people showed that, while they knew the common meaning of the term, they also held a different understanding of it, and used it in a different sense.

Bobbi-Jo, a 16-year-old from Williamstown in South Australia, posted an update warning others about Facebook accounts being 'hacked':

> *a lot of peoples accounts are being hacked lately so do yourself a favour and check where your facebooks logged into ive done it with both mine and sams accounts sam had someone from Brisbane on his account :S go into account settings then security settings and look at your active sessions you might be surprised.*

Like Bobbi-Jo, Noah had witnessed ‘hacking’ of accounts on Facebook. He shared how he, along with others, had reported it to Facebook when a friend’s account had been ‘hacked’:

> *the person who hacked it posted new status’s every 2 minutes, trying to sell all kinds of things. im pretty sure she gave up on facebook after her account was hacked. most of her other friends couldn’t be bothered deleting her. i reported it and so did a few other people and i think it is going to be deleted.*

Niko, too, had witnessed people’s Facebook accounts being ‘hacked’ and used in attempts to deceive others. He described the hackers’ behaviour as follows: ‘*they say things that are not true about that person and people believe it sometimes*’. A friend of Jess posted a comment to her Facebook wall explaining the real meaning versus the common understanding of being ‘hacked’, and highlighted how he believed her friends had been accessing her Facebook account:

> *“Hacked” is when someone “hacks” your computer from a remote location. IE: from their computer, they access yours. They hack in via an IP address and hacking software. But I’m quite sure your dirty status updates are coming from your friends accessing your account because you either left yourself logged in or they know your password.*

While three participants detailed their experience of accounts being ‘hacked’, as shown above, most had reframed the term and used it in a non-threatening sense. Abby spoke about Facebook accounts being ‘hacked’ by friends as a result of friends sharing passwords, or of people leaving their accounts open by not logging out. Abby described this as happening often, and felt it to be of no concern: ‘*All the time c: Generally when myself or my friends get hacked its just a joke as a status is nothing to worry about*’.

Evidence of friends ‘hacking’ participants’ Facebook accounts was seen on 16 per cent of young people’s walls, and five participants were also seen to have ‘hacked’ someone else’s account. These hacks appeared to have been done in a comical way, with friends posting statuses either announcing they had been on their account, or making jokes. For example:

> *Hey I just hacked Abby hahahahah (Abby)*

Sick of peoples shit. It doesn't matter who I hook up with, leave me alone. I'm not a slur [slut] (Ben)

Haha nice Ben nice… (Jack)

Jack actually fuck stop making statuses or I will shit in your mouth (Ben)

Ok that's the last one (Jack)

On two occasions, participants' parents were involved in 'hacking', as Nick's parents posted a status from his account and Oliver 'hacked' his mother's account after it was left logged in. 'Hacking' of Facebook accounts was identified by both male and female participants, all 15- and 16-year-olds, with the exception of Nick, a 17-year-old, whose parent 'hacked' his account.

Harmless 'stalking' and 'raping'

Another term which holds negative connotations in popular discourse is 'stalking'. Young people demonstrated that this concept took on new meaning for them in the context of Facebook. It was not only reframed, but even held a more positive meaning. As Bec explained: '*its not negative hahah, its more of a joke. people think of stalking as creeping outside windows at night and stuff, but all that is really happening is checking a web page*'. For participants in this research, 'stalking' described a much more innocent action of simply looking at or checking in with another person's Facebook page. In this manner, the word 'stalking' was used by young people in everyday conversation. Stalking was mentioned as being used in this way largely by the female 15- and 16-year-old's, with the exception of Michael, a 16-year-old male. Michael described his use of Facebook as including: '*get[ting] in touch with everyone I've ever known, catch[ing] up on homework I missed from school, stalk[ing] people photos*'. Also, Eve's Facebook page showed she had used a program to reveal who her biggest 'stalkers' were, providing the names of the people who viewed her profile the most.

The term 'stalking' was used in conversation by 18 per cent of participants. For example, Jehanne posted: 'So *awkward when your stalking someone and accidentally like one of there*

comments'; and Hannah commented: '*Only friends with people you hate so you can facebook stalk them every now and then ;)*'. On Jehanne's page, she and a friend had a conversation in which they used the term 'stalking' to refer to looking at each other's pages in a very positive way:

> *Just doing my daily stalk and thought I would pop in and say hey so, HEY. (friend of Jehanne)*
>
> > *THIS.IS.SO.WIERD. was just stalking you hey babe (Jehanne)*
> >
> > *NO YOU WEREN'T?! oh my god, I feel so special. I love being stalked hahaha. (friend of Jehanne)*
> >
> > *Hahahah same best feeling. (Jehanne)*

Like 'stalk', the word 'rape' had also been reframed by participants, and was used by young people in a harmless and non-serious sense. 'Stalking' was predominately used by females, but 'raping' was used equally by male and female participants. Six young people used the word 'rape' to describe Facebook friends repeated or large volumes of activity in the form of comments or likes, resulting in numerous notifications. Examples of this included:

> *I NEED TO RAPE YOUR WALL WITH AMAZING PHOTOS I FOUND, YOU'LL BE LIKE OMGGGGGGGG!(; (friend of Anna)*
>
> *I go to the rest room for 2 mins. Come back and find out I've been raped -.- (Ryan)*
>
> *Fuck. Everyone stop raping my notifications (Abby)*

Normalising risks

Young people on Facebook demonstrated an ability to 'unknow' risks by normalising them. While adult-centric accounts of these behaviours often frame them as risky, the findings show that, through a youth-centred lens, these behaviours have been normalised by young people. Behaviours that young people normalised included: self-harm; violence; sexual violence; threats of aggression; and shaming. These behaviours were visibly normalised in that they

attracted likes from other young people, received little to no negative reaction, and led to no visible consequences.

‘Ordinary’ self-harm

Self-harm was presented by participants in an ordinary way, including through photos. It was normalised by young people, with few consequences for posting such images. Rachel and Penny, both 15 years old, shared images reflecting on self-harming practices. These images were posted with no repercussions, and received no derogatory comments. Rachel posted an update requesting likes to complete a diagram about herself: ‘*5 likes to show you my story*’. After receiving likes, she uploaded an image (see Figure 24, below) of a human silhouette with colour coded marks to indicate self-harm, as well as ‘burn scars’, ‘childhood memories’, and ‘animal incidents’.

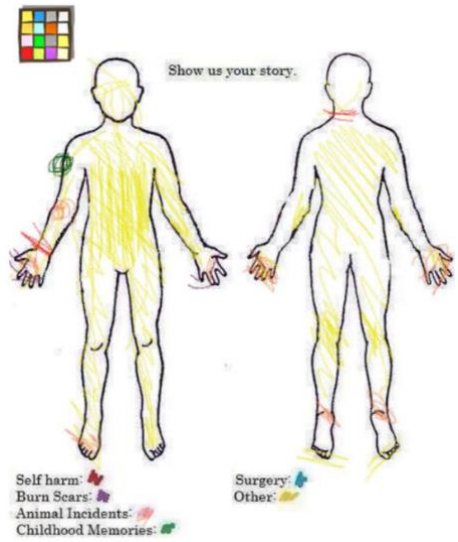


Figure 24: Image posted by Rachel

In a further example reflecting the ordinariness of self-harm through images, Penny was tagged in a screenshot of a text conversation (see Figure 25, below) between her and a friend. Descriptions of self-harm in this conversation appeared to be made in a comical way, and the image attracted five likes from Facebook friends and comments were made only by Penny and the friend involved in the conversation.

Figure 25: Image posted by Penny

Photos of self-harming were seen on two participants' pages. Firstly, Bohdan, the only male participant to reflect on self-harm, posted a photo of a heart shape cut into a hand. The picture was taken when the cut was fresh and still bleeding. This image received one like from a Facebook friend. Later, Bohdan posted another photo of himself with the heart-shaped cut, confirming it was his hand. This image received six likes from Facebook friends. Secondly, Lauren commented on a graphic photo (see Figure 26, below) showing a girl with a large heart-shaped cut in her back with the name 'Howie' written in her blood across her shoulders. The cut appeared to be quite deep, and she sits on blood-stained white sheets. The photo had received 4,423 likes, 26 shares, and 639 comments. The comments made were mixed, with some young people showing their disgust, and others expressing their appreciation. Lauren was unaffected by the image:

> *doesn't love have to have a little madness? And its her body to do with as she wishes. Personally I don't see the difference between this and a tattoo, except this is bleeding more.*

Figure 26: Image commented on by Lauren

Violence ‘in jest’

Like the screenshot posted by Penny discussing self-harming, humour was also used when discussing violence. Ben posted 12 status updates speaking about his friend Jake in a violent way. These updates involved threats towards his friend, however, it appeared that these were done ‘in jest’ to be humorous. It was apparent that Ben was good friends with Jake and that the comments he wrote were intended to be comical. Ben’s posts in this way demonstrate the normalising of violence in young people’s Facebook conversations. Such comments included:

> *Officially hate Jake and when I see him next I am going to snap his neck*
>
> *Going to make a bottle of coke to school and shake it up then spray it into Jake’s eyes. After that I am going to get a bag filled with gravel and smash it into his face continuously until his face is mangled and then I am going to throw his body into the football goals hoping that his spine cracks. ☺*
>
> *I hope Jake’s Mothers Day present is him dying. Hahahaha!*

The 12 comments Ben posted attracted a total of 158 likes from other young people and 84 comments. Ben’s Facebook friends joined in the violent banter ‘in jest’, and made comments such as: ‘*I’ll take the weak dog*’; ‘*Double team him?*’; ‘*I love compound fractures*’; and ‘*LOL*’.

Posting images and videos is common on Facebook, and some content that young people presented to their friends was confronting and violent in nature. Niko’s page provided several

examples. He reposted a photo of two males hanging a dog from a string tied around its neck. The males were both smiling and sticking up their middle fingers. The purpose of sharing this photo was to encourage people to re-post it in an attempt to identify the people and report them to the authorities. This image was then shared by one of Niko's friends. Niko also shared an image showing a scary clown in an orange t-shirt with the caption '*Repost or it will slit your throat at 5am*'. This image received no attention from Facebook friends, attracting neither likes nor comments. Confronting videos were seen, too, as Niko's Facebook page showed that he watched videos of young people street fighting. His timeline also documented his viewing a series of videos titled '*Our Fights After School* ☺'. The presentation of these violent posts received no derogatory comments from friends, and there appeared to be no consequences for Niko, indicating an acceptance and normalisation of violent postings.

'Liking' sexual violence

Sexual violence also appeared to be normalised by young people. Sinead depicted sexual violence in a comical way: '*She told me give her nine inches and make her bleed. So I fucked her three times and punched her in the face*'. This post received one like, and the comment '*ATTA GIRL*' from a Facebook friend. Lachlan also portrayed sexual violence: '*At the maccas playground standing at the bottom of the slide with my 15 incher out wating for the kiddies to slide down, free gob no biggie! I'm a reckless cunt*'. This post received 101 likes from friends. Instances of young people posting sexually explicit content and communicating with violent and sexually violent overtones was seen to attract few negative responses from their peers. Rather, likes were given, apparently encouraging the behaviours. In fact, group behaviour, which will be presented in the following chapter, was observed in which numerous young people made comments of a sexual nature about other young people, and many comments were sexually violent. These posts attracted likes from other young people, and received no opposing comments. For example, the comment '*LOOOOOL. Open event, dumb ganga*' received eight likes; '*You must love the cock*' received three likes; '*I'm keen to get down and dirty with 16 year old idiots who get drunk on cruisers*' received seven; and the most explicit comment '*Okay, so basically I just have a huge as dick, 16 inches. More details will be visible closer to your face. Obviously bring your own rufies and shit, if you want plus ones just add them to this orgy. My anus is open and I can have up to 600 people cumming, so if I get more then I will have to suck people. Xoxo*' received 46. There appeared to be no

consequences for those who engaged in this dialogue, and to the contrary, likes and encouraging comments were made.

Sexual violence was also normalised through photos. For example, Ben posted the comment '*20 likes and I will edit a picture of Jake. If I like it I will show Nathan for approval and then I will put it up*'. This post received 27 likes and seven comments. Ben had been posting photos of his friend which he had edited in sexual ways to be comical. Two examples were seen on Ben's Facebook profile. One had been edited to show Jake hugging a giant penis and attracted 26 likes from friends. Other young people then joined in making comments such as '*no better feeling than a big black rod being pumped in and around your ass. "quote Jake"'*. The other edited photo showed Jake engaging in a sexual act with another male and attracted 12 likes. Again, comments were made such as '*HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA, UP DA BUM.*'. A Facebook friend posted to Ben's wall '*please make more photos they're golden*', encouraging the creation of more sexually edited images.

Offhand threats of aggression

Young people described seeing threats of aggression on Facebook. They discussed these behaviours in an ordinary way, indicating that this was normal behaviour and that they were unaffected by witnessing it:

> *Just basic things, "stop saying ... about ... or i'll ... your face in, watch your mouth, you ... . " that sort of thing. (Courtney)*

> *"Your a slut, Your a bitch" and then they would talk about and usually threaten to beat eachother up and that sort of thing and it doesnt really get resolved. (Will)*

Comments containing offhand threats of violence were seen on participants' Facebook pages. Young people expressed their anger or upset with others through posts that often had a violent tone or violent language. These postings received no negative comments from others, but received likes, suggesting the normalisation of threats of aggression. For example:

> *I literally want to scream or punch my screen when I see your name come up. I hate, no, I despise you. I want you to live a life of hell (Yvettte) [3 likes]*

I'M GUNNA CUT YOUR FACE (Ben) [2 likes]

I'm not saying I hate her but I hope she gets fingered by wolverine (Hannah) [5 likes]

I WANT TO KILL YOU RIGHT NOW… WORDS CANNOT DESCRIBE THE ABSOLUTE ANGER YOU HAVE JUST CAUSED. (Ruby) [1 like]

As an exception to the normalisation of threats of aggression, Robyn, a 16-year-old female from Penrith in NSW, describes the risk of receiving threats of aggression that young people can face on Facebook. The intensity of this risk is evident in Robyn's comments, in which she points out that she witnessed name-calling, planned fights, and wishing of death upon others. Her comments also reveal how she believed threats of aggression can affect other aspects of people's lives:

I've seen kids telling others some of the meanest things. Calling names , planing fights, telling others to die . And much more… I've seen a lot of families fall apart because of Facebook. I've seen punch ups at schools because of something that was said online

Casual and comical shaming

Young people were also observed to shame their peers. As Niko put it: '*you cannot control what others say about you on facebook for a lot of people to see*'. Abby described this behaviour as:

making fun of people for their appearance or how they do things or even silly stuff like having a favourite band that the person being the bully might not like and then theres people who make racist comments or jokes about gay people and stuff

Shaming others on Facebook was normalised by young people. It was done as part of young people's everyday postings and conversations, and in a casual and comical manner.

Under a fifth of participants (16 per cent) engaged in behaviour that involved shaming comments. All participants that engaged in this behaviour were 15- and 16-year-olds. It was

also predominantly the females who exhibited this behaviour, with the exception of Ryan, a 16-year-old male, who identified as gay, and one comment from Lachlan, a 16-year-old male.

Friends had casual conversations on Facebook walls that others could see, often referring to third parties negatively by name. For example:

> *its sad how some people never change and will always cheat (Katharine)*
>
> *@ danny Morland (Katharine)*
>
> *Wanna hear a joke? …Brady Collins (Ryan)*
>
> *Totally agreed (friend of Ryan)*
>
> *Fucking dog act (Ryan)*

Also publicly shaming another young person, Bobbi-Jo posted: '*like this comment if you think im prettier than bonnie banks*', who Bobbi-Jo described as '*a very unpleasant girl from* ******'. Bobbi-Jo's friends liked the comment in response. Groups of young people were also directly invited into situations that were set up to shame them. In one example, Tess acknowledged a group email that was sent to students at her school detailing an online argument between students. Tess commented: '*ahahha just read the bitchy argument in the group email with all ****** students…pathetic really*'. A friend of Tess then shared the names of two students involved, and that friend also commented on how they found the argument to be comical.

Photos were also used to shame. Fiona, along with 60 others, liked a photo (see Figure 27, below) posted by one of her friends of a mutual friend intoxicated. The photo provoked a string of comments that mostly showed that the young people found it comical.

Figure 27: Image posted to Facebook of an intoxicated young person

Other young people displayed photos like the one above. Abby's page showed a tagged image of a friend leaning on a toilet bowl with the caption '*I aint blind ;)*'. This photo received 10 likes. In a similar way, Ryan uploaded a photo of a toilet cubicle, showing under the door a male and female engaging in what appeared to be a sexual act. He captioned the photo '*We lost B.. But I found her in the mens loo's… Now that's a classy bird! – with* ***Bianca Towney***'. Ryan and 13 others liked the photo. It appeared from the comments that this was a joke by Ryan, and that his Facebook friends found the post to be comical, with many posting '*hahaha*'. This photo attracted 23 comments, including one from the girl who was the subject of the post, who wrote '*revenge is sweet*'.

Most shaming by young people was done with few contradictory or negative responses from friends. This can be considered evidence that this kind of behaviour is normalised among young people. One exception was when Abby posted a negative comment about her mother, to which friends reacted. Abby wrote:

> *Well I don't give a shit how much of a bad name I get from having this status but you're possibly the biggest fucking dog ever. You make me so mad. Just because I'm not your perfect fucking daughter you think you can treat me like shit. Well no, fuck you. I'm over the shit you've been putting me through. One more thing and I'll fucking blow. You dog!*

Friends of Abby replied: '*abby this isn't okay. No matter how mad ur are or how messed up things are you are out of line speaking about your mother like that*'; '*abby this is very hurtful and no matter what your mum loves you. Yes there is bad times but it doesn't stop the love.*'; and '*if ur angry confide in a friend if you cant talk to her about it but don't disrespect your*

mother to the world. I love you and I know life sucks and im sorry I cant take ur pain away. But as I said shes ur mum'.

Conclusion

This chapter has described how young people 'know' and understand risk on Facebook. The findings show that young people recognise risks regarding privacy, emotional well-being and bullying. The awareness of these recognised risks affected young people's decisions about privacy and their actions to support the emotional well-being of friends and those who had been bullied. Young people also showed that they 'unknow' risks by reframing them, including reframing fighting to be insignificant, and giving the terms hacking, stalking and raping new meanings.

An important finding from the study is that young people also 'unknow'risks by normalising some behaviours, showing that they do not recognise them as risks, which was indicated by the likes that were attracted, the encouraging comments, and the lack of negative responses or other consequences. While no negative consequences were seen for this normalising behaviour, the capacity to ascertain the outcomes in more detail was not within the scope of this research and therefore not able to be generalised.

The previous chapter showed that young people interact through a variety of everyday practices. This chapter has demonstrated how young people 'know' and 'unknow' risk through recognising, reframing and normalising risks. In the next chapter, I will discuss how young people engage with risk through practices of 'making' and 'taking' risks.

Chapter Seven: Young People Making and Taking Risks on Facebook

The first findings chapter presented young people's everyday practices on Facebook. The second showed how young people 'know' and 'unknow' risks on Facebook through recognising, reframing and normalising them. This is the third and final findings chapter, which highlights how young people engage with risk on Facebook through the practices of 'making' and 'taking' risks.

Young people on Facebook make and take risks every day. It is how they engage with risk through their social interactions with others online. It is important to note the fluidity of these practices: young people are not fixed into any one practice, and there is often a blurring of boundaries. Young people may move from one practice to another, and their practices can also overlap. For example, a person who chooses to take risks could, at the same time, be *making* risk. Likewise, those who make risk are also taking them. Further, the practice of normalising risk presented in the previous chapter could be seen to also involve both making and taking risks. In spite of their fluidity, these practices are useful to understanding the dynamics of young people's engagement with risk on Facebook.

This engagement with risk is a complex matter. However, the findings indicate that young people 'make' and 'take' risks through connection, content, and collective practices.

Connection practices

Considering connecting with 'friends'

Literature and popular discourse highlight the risks involved in making new friends online. Social media panics stress that this behaviour could lead to harmful consequences. This research has found that young people make and take risks regarding who they connected with online. While some people only connected with 'known' friends, others felt comfortable

connecting with ‘friends of friends’, and for those who connected with unknown people there appeared to be no negative consequences. As with pervious findings, while no negative consequences were seen when young people connected with unknown people, the capacity to ascertain the outcomes in more detail was not within the scope of this research.

Nine of the 16 interview participants highlighted the idea that the safety levels of Facebook were partly determined by how each user behaved. Marko explained it this way:

> *Facebook can be a safe place and a dangerous place depending on the individual. If an account user is sensible and ads only people he/she knows or has seen and met in reality that that can be ok but on the other hand ive heard teenagers , boys and girls brag about the thousands of friends they have on Facebook, this can be dangerous because firstly they don’t even know or have met a quarter of them in reality and secondly they people they have added may be allot older than them and have different intentions for their use of Facebook.*

Connecting with people who are already known was one way of keeping safe: ‘*i feel its safer to only add people i know, if i added every person i could then theres a high chance of adding the wrong person and then i risk my online security.*’ (Noah). Georgina reiterated the point: ‘*I only ‘add’ people whom I’m actually close to, so I have 60 or so ‘friends’, so i think it is safe for me.*’.

When connecting with new people, participants approached their friends list in various ways, some being quite strict in who they added, some maintaining loose boundaries, and some being more open. Izzy, a girl from Queensland, admitted to not having ‘*a whole lot of friends*’, explaining: ‘*I find that there are many people that like to hurt you, so I choose my friends wisely*’. Izzy’s profile showed that she had 134 friends on Facebook. Interview participants who held strict limitations (50 per cent), primarily being that they must ‘know’ the person who they added to their Facebook friends list, were mostly 16 and 17 years old, and female, except for one male. Robyn stated: ‘*All my friends are people I have met in person.*’, and Georgina commented: ‘*It’s a 3 step process. Do I know them? If no, decline. If yes, Do I want to see all the stuff they post? If yes, do I want them to see what I write?*’.

Two participants, Bec, a 16-year-old, and Sinead, a 17-year-old, described how they were selective about which ‘real-life’ people they added to their Facebook friends:

> *im very picky about the 'real life' people i add. alot of 'real life' people.... are just annoying. or i work with them. or there is no point of me having them as a friend or i just plain dont want them to know what im doing, not that i post it all to facebook i only have like 200 friends on facebook, but other people i know who are my age have at least 1000. if its people i've just seen about school once or twice, i wont accept it (Bec)*

> *So i'm now limiting my friend count to 15 and people from outside of school and none from my previous school… Well, not many people are talking about others, and when they do; I don't know them, so this doesn't turn into gossip. Also, the people I add, I know who they are closely and It maintains order really… My friends have asked if I have facebook and I answered truthfully; that I only have a limited amount allowed (due to my boyfriends idea) and facebook causes fights and I don't want to risk losing friends who mean the most… they're really understandable people so they respect my choices. (Sinead)*

Lily, a 17-year-old college student from Devonport, Tasmania, held two Facebook accounts in order to separate her friends into two categories, those she knows less well and those she knows more personally:

> *this Facebook is strictly for people I have met the other one is for people who just wants to chat with me from younow… Because I feel that they don't need to know everything about me I mean they only meet me on younow… On this account it's simple if I'v meet them heard enough about them I confirm them if not I don't... I add everyone [to my second account]*

Her approach to Facebook demonstrated a common feeling among young people that they possess a sense of control over who to connect with on Facebook, and maintain a sense of responsibility in their choices.

Several interview participants (38 per cent) held some boundaries around who they communicated with on Facebook, and felt that they needed to have some connection with a person outside of Facebook before connecting there. Often this included knowing people from other online spaces, such as social media sites and gaming communities. For example, Georgina shared:

> *On my friends list I only have people that are friends. Honestly, yes, some of them are people I've met online, but I met them and become good friends with them before facebook existed, and I wish I knew them in real life… We met on an mmorpg that I'd played for about a year, I still play it, we helped each other out a bit, found out similar interests, now good friends… I feel closer to some of them than to people I know in real life, oddly enough xD… one day someone was all 'do you lot have fb? i'm blahblah, add me' and stuff, lol. I trust them very much. c:*

Included in the group of people who held some boundaries were those who put trust in 'friends of friends'. They were all 15 and 16 years old. Participants felt comfortable adding people who were already connected to or known by their friends. For example, Abby said: '*I have about 5 friends that I haven't met on my friends list. But they are good friends with my friends thats how I met them sorta so they aren't just random people all together*'. Noah also commented: '*sometimes i'll accept a request if they are a frend of a friend but not very often... well if a good friend tells me i can trust them then i'll accept their request.*'.

While interview participants gave some thought to the matter of making unknown friends online, observations of participants showed that on Facebook they held both strong and weak ties with friends. Weak friendships were observed on 30 per cent of participants' pages. Again, these participants were all 15 and 16 years old. Lachlan's page demonstrated that, of his 2,446 friends, he had friends whom he did not know well in person. For example, he received the message: '*Like: Don't really know you, but i've seen you around at basketball and you seem really nice, very attractive, (:*'. Flynn's page showed similar connections with some of his 460 friends: '*Tbh- I don't know you but I'm sure you'd be nice*'.

It was common for 'random' connections to be made by 15- and 16-year-old participants with complete strangers. Comments demonstrating this included:

> *Thanks for the add, random? (friend of Bohdan)*
>
> *Yeah random hope you don't mind ☺(Bohdan)*
>
> *Cheers for the add babe :') do I know you or? (friend of Tess)*
>
> *Random add hope you don't mind (Tess)*

When connecting with new friends on Facebook, young people shared how they 'suss them out': '*I google them to see what else comes up on them. You can find out other stuff*' (Joel). Similarly, Penny shared: '*I sometimes will look up people, sometimes just for a spy, sometimes to add as a friend. Yeh just to find out more about them, or see if they have a boyfriend or a girlfriend or whatever. Facebook stalking youknow!*'. In the same way, Ruby said:

> *I'm kind of open to adding people I haven't met in person. I'm not too worried about it, but i will suss them out once the connection is made, so i'll check out their profile and look at their pics and scroll through their page to see what they post and what people say to them and make a judgement call on what i see*

For one participant, Sinead, accepting new friends was not only a concern for herself but was also a consideration in relation to her brother. She spoke of how she monitored her younger brother's connections on Facebook and had some influence over who he remained friends with:

> *My brother meets them online (with no information) and then after i'm on his facebook. i ask who they are and decide if he can keep them. if i want further information on them, i go to their profile and their status's tell me who they fully are. i explained what happened to me when i got facebook (fights and stuff) and he agreed to check time to time. he is younger then me by 3 years… If they have proper english (im trying to keep his english up at school) how much swearing, where they are from, if they are saying nice things*

Decisions on connecting with new friends on Facebook were often based on a 'gut feeling'. Penny stated her approach: '*Go with my gut. Maybe it depends on their profile pic too. If their hot then their in!*'. Oliver described how 'you just know':

> *Sometimes after I've added a new person who i don't really know I might chat to them and suss it out. If they seem okay then i'll keep them as a friend, if they seem a bit off then I'll just delete them... Well you just know. Like you see what they say or post or the pics or whatever and you judge i guess. There is judgement everywhere. Everyone judges each other, that's how you know if a person is okay or not*

Also reflecting on that ‘gut feeling’, Yvette made the comparison to being at a party:

> *i think you just know. It’s like if your at a party and theres someone a bit odd or dodgy there and you don’t really want to talk to them, so you avoid them or move further away, you know you just get that feeling of “nah this doesn’t feel right”. That happens on here too, you just know, and then you don’t be friends with them and even block them if you want.*

Only two instances were observed of participants making unknown friends on Facebook and then continuing the relationship into other contexts. Both were female, one participant met the person face-to-face, and the other chose to webcam. Both instances were described as positive; one developed into a relationship, and the other solidified a friendship.

Maddie, a 15-year-old, described how her Facebook connection had not only led to a meeting in real life, but had evolved into a relationship. She shared how she had met her now ex-boyfriend on Facebook before meeting in person, and how she felt that it was safe to engage with him in this way. For Maddie, this experience of meeting someone on Facebook first and then planning to meet them in person was a one-off: ‘*I’ve met other people on the internet, but I haven’t planned to meet up with anyone else I’ve met online*’. She shared her experience:

> *I met my last boyfriend on Facebook haha*
> *He added me as a friend and we talked on chat and got to know eachother, then we met up in real life as friends, and then we met up again on a date.*
> *knew it was okay because we had alot of mutual friends*
> *And people i knew in real life knew him in real life*
> *And I’ve seen lots of photos of him on his profile*
> *And we met up at the shopping centre, so it was really safe*

Bec, a 16-year-old, spoke of how online friendships can develop over time and can spread across technologies. Her friendship began with her blog, continued on Facebook, and had, after three years, moved to webcamming:

> *steve i’ve been talking to since late 2009, we both love photography and get on great. its not sexual conversation. we never webcammed until actually a few days ago and it was weird to see him moving and hear him talking, but it was*

> *weird in a good way… i was pretty open with steve from the start, because were both into photography and the same age etc i think because it's not a 'romantic' thing there never really was a need or a want to have to be able to see and hear each other*

Affirming friendships

Young people used Facebook to affirm existing friendships. This connection practice showed young people making and taking risks through posts and actions that affirmed their friendships with each other:

> *There is no word that can ever… ever… EVER describe how amazingly perfect you are… my bestfriend I can honestly say that you have changed my life in so many different ways the one person I can trust with anything the one person that is always by my side… even if I am in the wrong… at this moment I am wishing I was chillen with you… creating unforgettable memories, every moment with you is unforgettable… you know what to say when I am down you know how to make me laugh you make life that much more wonderful I admire that you say when I am down. You know how to make me laugh. You make life that much more wonderful. I admire that you stay true to who you are. You make me feel special. I feel comfortable around you. I love the way you express yourself, dynamic and vibrant. Your patience in dealing with others is what I admire the most in your personality. Time becomes non-existent when I'm with you… When I'm with you it really doesn't matter where Im heading your smile lights up your face, and everyone's world. You will always be my best friend no matter what happens!!! I love you Molly. (Oliver)*

Oliver is a young male from Coffs Harbour, attending high school and has 750 Facebook friends. He used his 'about' section (see above), as did six others, to share his feelings about one particular friend. Oliver, like many others, used his Facebook account to affirm his friendships. He, and they, did this through comments in his 'about' and 'notes' sections, through wall posts, and through personal messages posted to friends' walls. There was a clear

sense of young people actively maintaining their friendships through these positive and public sentiments.

It was common for young people to list Facebook friends as 'family' in an act of affirming friendships. Forty-one per cent of participants' family lists clearly included friends; evident due to the large number of family listed on each account. The relationships listed also indicated that they were friends, as people the same age were listed as aunts, uncles, grandparents and children. For example, Oliver listed 51 family members, mostly brothers and sisters, but also cousins, parents, a grandparent, nieces and nephews. Sixteen participants falsely listed themselves as married or engaged to friends. This appeared to be done to affirm friendships and to be comical. Oliver shifted his marriage to three different people while a participant. Likewise, Robyn listed being married on three different occasions on her page. Joel listed himself as divorced. Tammy also clearly provided fake information about her relationship status: '*it was a fake relationship with one of my (girl) mates…just for shits and gigs*'. Only one participant appeared to have a legitimate engaged status, borne out by other wall posts about her engagement with her boyfriend.

In further acts of friendship affirmation, about a fifth of young people (18 per cent) posted messages to friends in a public way through status updates. For example, Lauren posted: '*Kelly Stuart is honestly amazing. Don't know where I would have been without you tonight*'. Again about a fifth of young people (21 per cent) also received positive messages on their walls. For example, on Sarah's wall was the comment:

> *You're the perfect best friend you're always there for me when I need a shoulder to cry on and always know what to say to cheer me up. We have so much fun together and I've never had a best friend anywhere near as perfect as you! even other people say we'll be best friends forever! And I know we will We've had so many amazing memories and we'll have so many more to come! I love you more than anything! (friend of Sarah)*

People were occasionally tagged in these messages (10 per cent), allowing the writer to direct the comment to a Facebook friend. This tag also meant that the comment would be displayed on both the writers' wall and the wall of the person tagged. For example:

> ***Oliver*** *feeling better with* ***Joshua***

Thank you to this kid for making my night a little bit better !
One of the best friends I could ask for
Always got my back and always there.
Thanks for being there for me bro. (Oliver)

Friendships were also affirmed through positive comments made to friends regarding photos. Photos that young people posted were commonly and repeatedly met with likes and positive comments from friends. A friend of Priya's posted: '*your wall photo is so lovely and gorgeous*'. Some other examples of kind comments in response to photos of participants being shared were:

You are so amazing Anna, I wish I was as awesome as you. You inspire me (friend of Anna)

Ok, this photo is ADORABLE!! (friend of Amelia)

Interestingly, the participants who engaged in this kind of friendship affirmation were mostly female. Of the two males who showed evidence of affirming friends in this manner, one identified as bisexual and the other as gay.

Making romantic relationships public

I love how smart you are, how sexy you are, how blonde you are, how girlly you are, how adorable you are, how cute you are, how funny you are, how nice you are, how sweet you are, how beautiful you are, how hot you are, how amazing you are, how fun you are, how perfect you are! your smile, your body, your legs, your hair, your personality, your humour, your jokes. My dream girl. My girlfriend and my bestfriend.My love and my all.
You. (boyfriend of Fiona)

Fiona is a young female from Hervey Bay in Queensland. She attends college and works two jobs at food establishments. She listed herself as 'in a relationship', and the above message was one of many public exchanges between Fiona and her boyfriend. This public declaration of love, which demonstrated making and taking risks, was common practice among young people in the research who were in relationships. Through Facebook, the often-personal

nature of romantic relationships was made public. More than half of participants (55 per cent) publicly shared their relationships through their Facebook pages, through relationship statuses, wall posts and photo uploads. This display of romance was overwhelmingly directed to females from their male partners. While females also posted such messages, it was largely boyfriends who made wall posts declaring their feelings for their girlfriends.

Young people also made their relationship public by uploading photos of themselves and their boyfriends or girlfriends. Along with a photo, Nick, for example, posted:

> *This is my girlfriend and i proud to say it! Through everything that has happened, she is the one that has been by my side the whole time! She is truly an amazing person and I really love her and dunno what or where I would be if she wasn't by my side!(: Thank you*

Reciprocating, Nick's girlfriend posted: '*2 months today gorgeous boy ☺getting better everyday even though that doesn't seem possible ☺I love you Nick xoxo*'.

Courtney and her boyfriend openly shared their romantic feelings towards each other, and described themselves as being engaged. Courtney posted numerous statuses declaring her love, such as: '*11 months with Toby today. I love you so much sweetheart*'. It was revealed on Facebook that Courtney and her boyfriend were expecting a baby, and in one status she wrote: '*I love you Toby, and I love our child, whom is developing into whoever they want to be. I will support and love you both for the rest of my life*', and in another she shared an ultrasound photo. Courtney also uploaded a personal letter her boyfriend had written to her, accompanied by a photo of the two of them with a heart superimposed around their faces. The letter read:

> *I love you so much Courtney. Courtney you are the most amazing girl I know, I hope you never leave me because you mean so much to me, so much more than anyone or anything, I couldn't live without you baby. I enjoy each and everyday with you there is never a second in a day that I wish you weren't with me, I hope to spend the rest of my life with you, I hope you never let go of me or give up on me cause I will never let you go or give up on you. Your so gorgeous baby I think you are the most beautiful girl on the planet, your always gorgeous no matter what, and you are really, really cute when you sleep. I love being with you, I love being around you, I love everything about you. You may*

annoy me sometimes and make me angry but that's not always your fault its just my personality I get focused on something and then everything around me annoys me, its not your fault baby and it never will be, I just wish you wouldn't always blame yourself for everything. Because half the time its my fault. I'm the one that makes you upset and angry and does stuff wrong, and I always get mad at the little stupid things and I try not to blame it on you and I'm really sorry if it seems like I blame everything on you sometimes but I don't mean too and im soooo sorry for everything and anything I have put you through, someone as amazing as you doesn't deserve to be treated like shit by anyone, you to amazing for that baby. Hehe, I can't wait will Christmas, I'm so keen to get engaged to you, and im really sure I want to do it and then I want to get married and when we can and I want to be together forever, and have a really good future. Just have to get you a $600 ring, and that's cheap because you are worth so much more than that. I will love you forever baby that love will never burn out, I know that for sure. I love you baby so so much, Forever and Always

Eve's Facebook page also demonstrated the positives and negatives of relationships, detailing happy moments, as well as her break up and the hurt that followed. The following comments, in chronological order, demonstrate the change in feelings:

Goodnight my baby girl love you heaps (boyfriend of Eve)

Awww I love u too !! (Eve)

I love you the most >3 (boyfriend of Eve)

R u my girl?? (boyfriend of Eve)

Sureeeee am bruzzzzz (Eve)

R u sure?? (boyfriend of Eve)

100 % (Eve)

:D oi gtg babe love you hope you have a goodnight xoxoxoxo (boyfriend of Eve)

Love u !! Xo (Eve)

Wats it gonna take for u to notice that I only want u and no one else I don't care what other people say I only want you I dono why that is so hard for u to see (Eve)

Its gonna take trust no speaking bout me behind my back and when u smile and say I love u n only want u actually mean it unlike the whole grad thing uv told acouple of ppl (boyfriend of Eve)

Ok I wont. I mean I will ahh whatever u know what I mean (Eve)

Yep (boyfriend of Eve)

Blockin u out of my life cause im fed up with yur shit every single day of my life !!!!!!!! single bee ☺ (Eve)

To think I fucking trust any kucking back stabbing cunt in this shit hole of a fucking town!! Ever the ones u thought u fucking could trust!! (Eve)

You okay beb? Inbox if you need. (friend of Eve)

Jacob kissed Susan Lee firday night (Eve)

Wtf was he thinking? (friend of Eve)

His a fucking cunt I want nothing to do with him (Eve)

Following this, Eve's relationship status changed from 'in a relationship' to 'single', and she posted this status: '*As if you haven't hurt me enough then u make status's about me like that ☹ thanks heap*'.

Oliver commented in his confusion about how people on Facebook in relationships changed their relationship status easily. He wrote: '*I don't understand those couples that fight and a minute later write in their status on facebook: "single" I fight with my parents but you don't see me write a status saying "orphan"*'.

Content practices

Assertive and defensive posts

Young people also demonstrated making and taking risks through content practices on Facebook. Content posted on Facebook showed young people confidently asserting and defending themselves. Participants described how young people can be more confident and more assertive while communicating with others on Facebook than they can be offline. Participants, all 16 years old, described how for some people, interacting with others through social media gave them a boost in confidence, which then resulted in them acting in ways they otherwise might not:

> *some people act differently on facebook than in real life… act tough on facebook, but in real life they're completely different people… the way they speak changes… they're quicker to become aggressive or stick up for themselves… not like you're going to get punched…so it's easier for people to stick up for themselves (Michael)*

> *people feel more confident behind a computer screen… people always use 'keyboard warrior' and its so true because people can act tough over facebook (Bec)*

> *you know its easier to defend yourself online then real life.... You maybe too intimidated to defend yourself in real life depending on the situation, where as when you're online you just have to type an insult without the worry of being beaten up (Niko)*

Wall posts showing assertiveness were seen on 32 per cent of participants' pages. These kinds of comments all came from females, mostly 16 years old, with the exception of one 17-year-old and one 18-year-old. They wrote comments such as:

> *No, I don't care what you think of me. I don't care wether you like me, I don't care if you don't share my opinion, or if you think I'm weird, or the things I say are stupid. So don't bother telling me, it's just another few breaths of oxygen wasted on you. (Lauren)*

> *I am so over the term 'cakefaced sluts'. 1. Most girls, including me, don't wear makeup for boys, they do it for themselves and really who the fuck cares. 2. Boys you shouldn't be calling any girl this, you don't know them, you don't know their story. And girls as soon as you start throwing this out there, it becomes socially acceptable and boys will use it against you. Really, you should all stop being judgemental fags and stop judging girls because of their makeup or their sex lives. Don't be nosy. That is all. (Ruby)*

Participants also defended themselves through Facebook posts. For example, Courtney, a 16-year-old female, posted a status update revealing to her Facebook friends that she was expecting a baby, and sharing her feelings about the judgements of others:

> *To those of you who surprisingly don't know, I am pregnant. And to those of you whom want to start rumours about this, let me tell you one thing now, I don't care that I will soon learn who my real friends are, because I would rather be talking to my real friends, than those who just don't give a shit. But I will also say this: You can say shit about me, all you want, I don't give a shit. But when you say shit about my baby, and supposedly my baby's father being unknown, I will not put up with it. Fuck your rumours, fuck your lies, now get the hell out of my life. And don't you dare say you are going to punch the father of my child, because he told his mum, that he found out the truth about you starting the rumour, and him wanting you out of HIS house! That is what is deserved. It is also to be expected. So those of you who start anything, expect to be fucked off out of mine, and my child's life. Because I will not have these lies started, for my baby to hear, when he/she grows older.*

In another example, Oliver, 16 years old, made a wall post expressing his feelings on others' judgements about his sexuality. This post showed Oliver expressing a sense of pride about being gay and regaining his power by asserting and defending himself. His post, below, was met with 19 likes and comments of support from friends:

> *Okay, yes the word 'gay' means you're attracted to those of the same sex.*
> *You know what it also means? Happy. So why can't I be exactly that?*
> *Now I don't normally dwell of this sort of stuff but I just can't put up with it anymore..*

> *I'm sick to death of being put down because of who I am as a person over the last week I have had 'friends' who have known me for years no longer want anything to do with me because they found out the truth. It's not like I'm a different person to who I was 5 minutes ago?*
> *Over the last week I have had nothing but abuse from everyone. Constantly being put down and being made to feel so small and I'm now to the point where I can't cope.*
> *The worst part is I have no one I can really talk to about all this.*
> *So I'm just going to put it out there for you all to see.*
> *I'm gay.*
> *Understand it.*
> *Get over it.*
> *If you can't manage to do that then delete me off facebook, delete my number, whatever it is people do these day.*
> *If it really offends you that much I'm not asking you to stick around. I don't need this bullshit anymore.*

Later in this chapter, a conversation thread will be presented from a 'Most beautiful teen contest' page that Ruby had liked. Bullying comments had been posted which included recommendations of self-harm and suicide. The receiver of this message responded: '*I am not going to cut myself. Sure I have been bullied, sure I have low self esteem, but I am not ready to end my life. I have a wonderful boyfriend and a wonderful family*'. This is another example of a young person asserting themselves.

In a further example, Penny posted a Facebook update in her defence, explaining her feelings about people slut-shaming her. Her update prompted debate among her Facebook friends; most came to her defence, although some fuelled the debate negatively. The conversation ended when Penny stopped engaging and a group of Penny's friends turned to sarcastic and comical posts. Penny's post, which received 73 likes, read:

> *I'm seriously so over everyone thinking and saying I'm a slut and thinking as though I have no self respect. Just because all of my friends are guys and I don't get along with girls what so ever doesn't at all mean I'm a slut or sleep with all my mates. Just because I laugh along to it or don't say anything when people say shit to me doesn't mean I'm okay with it, I actually take it so hard to*

> *heart. Everyone is always complaining about how terrible society is and how bullying is terrible but none of you guys notice you all do it so much even the littlest things bring people down. I never noticed until the last two weeks how horrible and heartless people can be even the closest of friends its completely disgusting. Bullying someone is pretty much being a murderer you keep pushing and pushing someone until they don't have the strength to keep going and they kill them selves. I don't get why you'd want to be the reason or part of the reason someone's killed them self. If you don't want it to happen to you don't do it to someone else.*

Expressing feelings

The participants demonstrated how Facebook served as a space in which young people could express themselves. It offered chances for young people to share their personal feelings in a reflective way. Lily explained: '*I can express how I feel on my status sometimes I like how I can relate to others and how sometimes I don't feel alone*'. Similarly, Lauren posted how Facebook made her feel as though she wasn't alone:

> *Those nights you know you're going to cry yourself to sleep, when you stay logged on a little longer so you don't feel as alone as you will once you log off, when you don't feel good enough for the world, when you don't want to face everything the next day, when you just feel so very tired, and you can't take it anymore*

It was common practice for young people to use Facebook as a space to express their feelings to their Facebook friends. Often this expression was through short wall posts, one or two sentences long, with 30 per cent of participants using Facebook to post this kind of statement. For example:

> *People say there is nothing worse than being alone… what's worse than being alone? Being used, lied to, deceived, fucked over, abandoned, left behind and completely forgotten. All by the one person ☹(Oliver)*

Ask me how I am, and ill say the same thing, everytime, "fine" and smile, but you have no idea (Ryan)

You're going to call this attention seeking and emotional, but guess what Facebook says to post what's on my mind. What's on my mind is emptiness and loneliness. It's all that's ever on my mind and I'm sick of it. (Nathan)

Young people also made longer posts to express their emotional state, such as:

Mum: What's wrong?
My mind: I used to do so well in school but I'm not anymore.
My mind: The people I call friends, aren't my actual friends.
My mind: I'm constantly feeling alone.
My mind: I'm starting to look at myself different.
My mind: Nothing feels the same anymore.
My mind: I feel like I'm going to fail at anything I try to do.
My mind: I haven't been eating that much and I'm hungry all the time.
My mind: I feel like no one cares about me.
My mind: I just wanna sleep all day and never wake up.
Me: Oh nothing I'm fine. (Abby)

Have you ever laid in your bed and just cried? Because you think you're ugly. Because you're not good enough for anyone. You've counted all your flaws from head to toe, making yourself feel worse. Cried because of all the comments people blurt out, actually hurt? Cried because your family is dysfunctional and never understands you. They tell you to stop complaining, that you have it so much better than the kids in Africa, even though they don't understand your life either. You don't wanna feel like an attention seeker, so you bottle everything up. Around friends and family you've created this lying smile and people believe it. Sometimes they ask you why you're staring out of the car window- but you can't just say that you'd like to jump just to feel alive again. You can't tell them there's a voice In your head telling you that you're worthless. So you just smile and act like everything's okay. But than at night time, when you're all alone in your bed, the girl who everyone thought was

> *always so happy, is crying her fucking broken heart out, because she can't stop feeling like complete shit. (Penny)*

Interestingly, the expressive posts were all by females, or by males who identified as gay or bisexual. Posting in this manner was also more often seen on the pages of participants aged 15 and 16 years.

Providing further evidence of Facebook as a place to express feelings, young people made comments that reflected grief and loss. Posts reflective of grief and loss were largely by females. Facebook was used by nine young people as an outlet to write public messages about loved ones who had died. Some of these reflections were composed as if speaking directly to the person who had died. For example:

> *A year ago tomorrow i lost you Mitch not only where you my best friend you were my brother as well, and not a day has gone by where you havent crossed my mind. I miss hearing your voice and getting advice from you our COD sessions being creepy and taking photos of you sleeping, i really just miss you in general and it still doesn't seem legit that your gone, within the week of your death all i did was think about how i could bring you back with our sister Suzie i never knew what it felt like to loose someone i loved until i lost you, your the only boy i've ever loved and would do anything for, and i know all i will do is cry tomorrow because your my weakness.*
> *i love you so much baby RIP ♥ (Penny)*

Other statuses were more reflective and were posted to mark a family member's passing or the anniversary of their death. For example, Ruby posted: '*RIP to my dads uncle Fred who lost his battle with cancer this morning ☹ Another loved one lost to cancer </3*'. Maddie uploaded a photo of her pop along with the words, '*This is my pop. He lived to be 75 years old. He always worked hard and wanted the best for his family and everyone in his life. He was loved by a lot of people and he will always be remembered*'. In another example of expressing loss, Charlie, the only male participant whose action expressed grief and loss, liked a community page set up to honour a deceased teacher. Charlie, along with 70 other young people, demonstrated respect for this teacher and honoured his memory by sharing their appreciation of him.

Priya made multiple references on her Facebook page to a friend who had died, stating simply on her About page: '*RIP Liam Toby Vincent Simons*'. Priya also shared her feelings during a confession chain about Liam. She wrote: '*C15. The person who'm I miss more than anyone is Liam. I don't really talk about him to anyone except an occasional statement on his birthday or the anniversary of his death. Its been nearly two years since he died and everyday I blame myself and wish I could go back in time to fix things… I love you Liam*'. In another post, Priya gave a revealing update about her relationship with Liam:

> *Explaining my best friend in a few sentences, how can you ask someone to do that? To put someone's life into words like this. How can my words ever fully describe that boy who holds my heart till this very date and probably forever. His golden brown hair, the green eyes that changed from blue to black, the porcelain pale skin, with the slightly chapped yet perfect chapped lips and that cute button nose. I know I've said this before and I'll say it again Liam was the most amazing person I ever met. The kid knew me better than I knew myself, Liam Toby Vincent Simons, 16 years old, born on September 17th 1994, favourite colour green, most prized possession was his guitar and he loved music. As he once said 'I live, breathe and eat music'. Liam was the most inspirational person I ever met, he was the kid who laughed at everything but also knew when to be serious. He brought out the best and the worst in me. I remember many a times finding him in his horrible states and not letting anyone else feel his pain. He lived in a world where he was never able to feel safe, where he felt he had to be reckless to feel alive. Liam was the kind of guy who never ever wanted me to be hurt by what he was going through. He was the kid who knew all my secrets and I would do anything just t see him again and say how much he means to me. Everyone who knew Liam, knew he was special, in a way that none of us can ever be, he knew he was going to die yet he would pretend everything was perfect around us. He was incapable of expressing himself in person but hidden in the corner of his room with his guitar in his arms and tears stained on his cheeks where his 'plastic smile and painted mask' was removed. He was reckless and relentless but most importantly he was the person who saved me. I owe my life to Liam. But I could never save him, no matter how much I tried, but he's in a better place now, a place where he can sleep easy at night, wake up with a smile on his face and be*

> *honest to god truthfully happy. Even though he's so far from me and it kills me on a daily basis he's happy now and I know that he's watching over me every day and that I will see him again because I could never forget my first love R.I.P Liam Toby Vincent Simons.*

Both male and female participants expressed the view that Facebook is a place where young people can overshare. Participants who made these comments were mostly 16 and 17 years old, with the exception of one 15-year-old male. Ben shared his displeasure at a Facebook friend for sharing their negative thoughts through Facebook: '*Why are people putting all their problems on facebook tonight? I am going to shit in their mouths*'. Marko commented: '*its funny how people pour their hearts out on fb*'. Will commented in a similar vein:

> *even though we are all on facebook doesn't mean we have to degrade ourselves onto telling it every detail of our lives for attention its not right, what we keep personal is so important' and 'you keep things personally for two reasons. They're private and precious, you want them to stay special and sacred. Or they're important and it would be disrespectful to post online*

Jess remarked disapprovingly that '*Facebook isn't a diary*'. Ruby also commented negatively: '*Oh look another self pity status*'. Here, Sarah shared a comical view about how people use their Facebook pages to share personal reflections:

> *Okay, this is my life, this is where I describe my life in great detail trying to make it sound as dramatic and heart-wrenching for facebook as I can, I really want attention, just please, someone feel sorry for me!!!! Okay so, this is where I write about someone I wasn't really close with dying, my second cousins fish's brothers son, Abdul, it was so bad, life has never been the same, I can't go on. This is where I write about the self-diagnosed mental conditions I don't actually have, like my super extreme depression that followed after the death of Abdul, and my anxiety (not really, sometimes I just get scared when I walk to the fridge at night). This is where I write a whole fucking novel bout all the people that have helped me through everything (which isn't even that bad at all) This is where I explain all the hardships me and my bestie have had even though there is none and how she's made me so much stronger. This is where I explain why you shouldn't judge me and how lots of things in my life are bad*

(even though I go shopping twice a week and live in a really nice house and have everything I need and should be thankful as balls for. PLEASE GIVEE MEEE ATTENSHUNSZZZ OMG DON'T JUDGE)

Posting sexually suggestive photos

Posting sexually suggestive photos was a content practice through which young people made and took risks. Females were the target of judgement about sexually suggestive photos, and it was the female participants who engaged in the posting of such photos of themselves. Young people gave thought to the appropriateness of the photos. For example:

I've shared photos of me at a party in a bikini, but I wouldn't share a photo in underwear or any less clothes than that. (Maddie)

Common sense, I think… I don't think it's all that difficult to figure out. You wouldn't walk into work wearing a bikini - you wouldn't put that online where your employer could see. You wouldn't stand in the middle of the mall and get drunk - don't put any evidence of that where other people can see it either... Basically, the internet is part of life. THe same social norms app[ly] as they do in the real world. That needs to be remember, foremost... (Nicole)

Nicole found the sharing of sexually suggestive photos and statuses disagreeable: '*I don't like it a lot when I see twelve or thirteen year olds posting super revealing photos and suggestive statuses*'. Like Nicole, several young people commented on others uploading sexually suggestive photos, placing moral judgements on their choices. For example:

So, it seems the only way girls get shitloads of likes on their photos, is either for you to see their boobs, to take pictures in bikinis, or to have like a gazillion friends that they don't know. Wow, people can be seriously shallow (Courtney)

Yeah that's right, force your boobs out and push your ass up just to get more likes from shady people who you don't even know, yeah having a duck face in all your selfies makes you look cool. Just try and be yourself and show some face under all that make-up, or else you look like a clown (Will)

Only two of the 73 participants, both females, Ashley and Penny, shared sexually suggestive photos of themselves. There did not appear to be any negative consequences for them in doing so. However, the capacity to ascertain the outcomes in more detail was not within the scope of this research. Ashley shared many selfies which included cleavage. For example, she uploaded a selfie in a tight, low cut top which focused on her cleavage and was captioned '*oh hey*'. A friend commented underneath, '*I feel I speak 4 a lot of ppl but no one looks at ur face in these pictures*', to which Ashley responded '*I cant help that god gave me them things*'. In another selfie she wore only a bra and pouted at the camera, and in two others she smiled, posing in a bikini top. Ashley was also tagged in more intimate photos, such as in her bathers at the pool, sitting across the lap of a male as he lay down, and a mirror selfie of her and two girlfriends posing with their legs and midriffs exposed. Ashley also made a status about how a friend had uploaded some of her pictures to the porn site Redtube. It was apparent that Ashley was not bothered by this, as she and a friend then commented on the number of likes the account had received, and enthused: '*yesss playboy might finally discover meeee*'.

Like Ashley, Penny also shared sexually suggestive photos of herself, uploading an album of 44 photos containing a series of posed shots of her and a friend. Penny also uploaded a photo of herself from behind wearing only underwear and captioned '*I'm such a Ganga Look at me go*'. Another photo showed Penny and a friend with their trousers down, revealing their underwear. In another photo, Penny and a girlfriend posed on a public bus wearing revealing clothing, with Penny leant forwards pushing her breasts together.

The 'sneaky hat' phenomenon was witnessed on only two female participants' Facebook pages. Niko described the 'sneaky hat' trend as '*when someone strips down naked and covers there genitals with a hat and takes a picture of it and show it to facebook*'. Penny uploaded a photo of herself captioned '*sneaky books. Nudeee*' and showed herself naked on her bed with a book covering her chest. Penny also uploaded a photo of herself with a soda bottle covering her breasts and captioned it '*sneaky soda*'. Eve posted a status showing her intentions to create a 'sneaky hat' photo with the words '*me n megan gon do a sneaky hat shot ;)*', which two people liked. However, this image was not seen on her page.

The 'sneaky hat' trend was frowned upon by a quarter of interview participants (25 per cent): '*there is a lot of content that is 15 plus on it. Like sneaky hat photos and for a young child to come across it wouldn't be that good… They are horrid.,. Yes they both [male and female] have posted these pictures*' (Robyn). However, other participants took a more relaxed view of

the photos, describing the trend as a bit of harmless fun. As Lucas put it: '*haha, the ones with chicks are awesome and the ones of dudes should be taken down… [sneaky hat photos are] not very common, it seems facebook has taken them down… [Facebook has removed them] cause they're inappropriate and revealing? and awesome?*'.

Collective practices

Communal fighting through argumentative banter

Name-calling and belittling behaviour were seen in Facebook conversations between young people. This behaviour was a collective practice involving making and taking risks. These acts were described by participants as 'fighting'. Participants vented their disapproval for this behaviour. For example, Will posted, '*humph why does everyone have to fight its really annoying*', and Ben shared, '*Why people think it is cool to mouth each other on facebook is beyond me. Grow up!*'.

Communal fighting through argumentative banter was evident on 26 per cent of participants Facebook accounts. Often short arguments were seen within threads of comments on people's Facebook statuses. Name-calling and belittling behaviour were prominent as young people relayed comments to each other, using phrases such as '*fucking whore*', '*dumb dog*', '*stfu and fuck off*', '*the shit one*', '*slut*', '*little devil*', '*ya shit*', '*girl guide*', '*fucking pussy*', '*DICKHEAD*', '*fucking gay*', '*fucking homo*', '*fucking bogan cunt*', '*shut the fuck up*', '*ya dumb cunt*', '*virgin with a bowl cut*', and '*gay cunt*'.

Argumentative banter on Facebook often involved two young people relaying comments. For example, Priya had an argument with a Facebook friend when they began debating whether people in countries other than Australia refer to their currency as 'bucks'. A part of the conversation read:

> *Well maybe you should get your ears cleaned ☺(Priya)*
>
> > *Or.. you should (friend of Priya)*
> >
> > *Or you could stop being an annoying child. (Priya)*

Or…maybe you could ;) (friend of Priya)

Oh wait I forget you're a lame tween who thinks commenting on people's satuses with winky faces is cool. (Priya)

;) yep you got it ;)… so on a bright side… how's india going for you? living in the slums m guessing? (friend of Priya)

I hope you relaise the comment contradicts the status (Priya)

mmm….not really.. maybe you drove to the city one day to go shopping with your 'bucks' but then as usual you return to the slums where you belong ;) (friend of Priya)

Only people with your personality live in slums, not people like me. Cause last time I checked it would be impossible for me to live in a slums while being able to afford airplane tickets, stay in 5 star hotels, attend a private school, own two houses, travel the world and be a national athlete. And I thought you were supposed to be smart. hahaha (Priya)

Well. Priya you said it all.. however, even though I am capable completely thrashing your previous comment, I am not going to stoop to your level of immaturity. Which in this case is quite low.. yikes (friend of Priya)

You mean rise to my level of maturity, considering you obviously have no life which is why you're commenting and continuing to use up my valuable time, like always. Now I must bid farwell as 1. I have a life. 2. I came to India on holidays to visit friends and family who actually care about me. 3. I'm getting ready to go out. Adios. (Priya)

At other times, arguments involved many more people, as shown on Ryan's page. One of Ryan's statuses prompted friends of his to engage in argumentative banter. The comments totalled 305, as young people argued about the content shared on Facebook. Comments included:

people need to get a life why put everything on Facebook (Daniel, friend of Ryan)

i don't put everything on Facebook, some people need to not be so rude daniel (Ryan)

ever heard of the delete button daniel, or are you retarded? (friend of Ryan)

who's the retarded one? (Daniel, friend of Ryan)

you need to learn to read…. And spell (Ryan)

daniel stfu? (friend of Ryan)

Collectively supporting friends

Fighting, as described in this chapter, was a collective practice of young people on Facebook. When young people witnessed this, they acted in collective ways that supported their friends. For example, there was an argument between Abby and a Facebook friend, and other friends came to Abby's defence, demonstrating collective support for her. Abby received comments such as: '*your lil' episode, swearing and carrying on was just pathetic.. ha!*'; '*Heeey guess what!!!! God made mountain, God made trees, God made you but we all make mistakes*'; and '*You must have been born on a highway because that's where most accidents happen*'. Friends of Abby's commented in her defence:

Honestly, it disgusts me. Grow up, it's actually called bullying, and bullying is illegal. Leave Abby alone, she hasn't done anything wrong, like seriously, what the fuck is wrong with you? Do you like making people upset

If someone thinks you're a mistake… clearly THEY are mistaken!! And possibly need psychiatric help… Just saying

remember Abby, it takes a bigger person to walk away than it does to stand and retaliate xoxox, ignore it hun they aren't worth the effort if they can be that nasty

Following this, Abby posted a status expressing her upset and anger at the comments. The girl continued to tease Abby, resulting in 44 comments, all showing support for Abby – except from the original girl. Several friends suggested blocking her, which Abby did.

Penny's Facebook page also highlighted how Facebook friends act in collective ways to support each other when negative experiences occur online. Penny posted a statement describing how someone had created a page titled 'RIP Penny'. She wrote: '*When some little fucking queer adds you on facebook and has a RIP page for you.! The amount of anger i have is crazy*'. This comment was met with 86 likes and a multitude of comments showing shock and disapproval at this turn of events. Penny made a further post: '*So torn its not funny who ever made that page delete it, you heartless fucks.!*'. This wall post was met with 59 likes. Penny made a third post: '*RIP Penny DELETE THIS RIGHT NOW, DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND HOW MUCH PAIN THIS HAS ACTUALLY PUT ME THROUGH, I CAN HARDLY SEE MY OWN SCREEN TO TYPE MY EYES ARE SO FULL OF TEARS FUCK YOU.!*' Again, Penny's friends showed support through a shower of likes, 261 in all. Friends of Penny also showed their support by reporting the page to Facebook. They commented: '*Give me the link and I will report it like crazy*'; and '*everyone report it and it will be taken down x*'. In further support of Penny, friends began to post comments on her wall, including:

> *To Whoever Decided To Be A Heartless Person And Make Up That "RIP Penny" Page, Should Do Some Serious Thinking About How Penny Feels Now. She Is Alive, Brave And Fighting For Her Life As Best She Can, Think About How You Have Made Her Feel, You Have Crushed Her Badly Inside. I Am Sure You Wouldn't Like Someone To Make A Like Page About You If You Were Fighting For Your Life So Grow Up And DELETE The Page. Immature People!*

> *You're an amazing beautiful strong girl, don't waste your tears on this low lifes attempt to upset you. You are so much better than they are. You have so many people who love you miss and are here to support you. Love you miss xxx*

Arguments on Facebook were seen mostly on female participants' pages, although both male and female friends involved themselves in the conversations. As arguments occurred – which were largely between two or three people – others attempted to defuse the situation and offer support. Interjectory comments were made, such as: '*Kids, kids, chill the fuck out. This is*

JUST Facebook. K?'; and '*Guys seriously I can see how you have all being angered by each other. But seriously. Chill. Da fuck. Out*'.

On Sarah's wall, a debate broke out between Sarah and a Facebook friend who had been criticising Sarah about one of her wall posts. After a few comments, another friend of Sarah's interjected: '*Sarah can write whatever she likes, who are you to tell her what she should and shouldn't be posting. If you don't like the things she writes, delete her*'. Bec also interjected into a conversation that was turning towards an argument on her page between two of her male friends. The conversation began calmly, but escalated to one friend saying: '*Only losers drink on Thursday nights anyway*', to which the other friend, at whom this comment was aimed, responded: '*I do what I want cunt, and proud of it… go suck a penis or something*'. Bec intervened at this point: '*Whoa guys! Let's keep it g rated please, it's a Thursday night!*'. In the only example on a male participant's Facebook page of an argument in which friends intervened in the conversation, friends of Noah were engaging in argumentative comments. Swear words and insults were being exchanged between two people when another friend interceded, saying: '*OK calm down Benji? You don't need to tell people to kill themselves? Leave the group yea?*'. After this, Benji stopped commenting and the argument ceased.

Sharing bullying experiences with friends

> *A teacher in New York was teaching her class about bullying and gave them the following exercise to perform. She had the children take a piece of paper and told them to crumple it up, stomp on it and really mess it up but do not rip it. Then she had them unfold the paper, smooth it out and look at how scarred and dirty it was. She then told them to tell it they're sorry. Now even though they said… they were sorry and tried to fix the paper, she pointed out all the scars left behind. And that those scars will never go away no matter how hard they tried to fix it. That is what happens when a child bully's another child, they may say they're sorry but the scars are there forever. The looks on the faces of the children in the classroom told her the message hit home. Pass it on. (Hannah)*

Hannah is a 15-year-old female from Redcliffe in Queensland. She attends school and has 539 friends on Facebook. Hannah shared the above status about bullying. It appeared that this post was part of a chain message, as Hannah's comments urged those reading to 'pass it on'. Hannah was one of the few young people whose Facebook page showed evidence of being bullied online. Four young females, two participants and two friends of participants, experienced bullying by anonymous people through social media. They used Facebook to publicly share their bullying experiences. In all instances of bullying, it was apparent from the comments that the writer of the bullying comments knew the victim, as their communications included references to schools and named other young people. I will now describe these instances.

Hannah had received bullying messages (see Figure 28, below) through Tumblr. These messages included emotionally abusive statements with incitements to suicide. Hannah posted the image to Facebook with the status '*stop sending me anons peoples, just inbox me or send it as yourself arggh*'.

Figure 28: Screenshot of bullying messages sent to Hannah

After Hannah posted the messages on Facebook, she received a further anonymous message. Hannah shared this, too (see Figure 29, below), and accompanied the image with the statement: '*Whoever this is please stop, I don't care if you are rude to me just don't be rude about my mates*'.

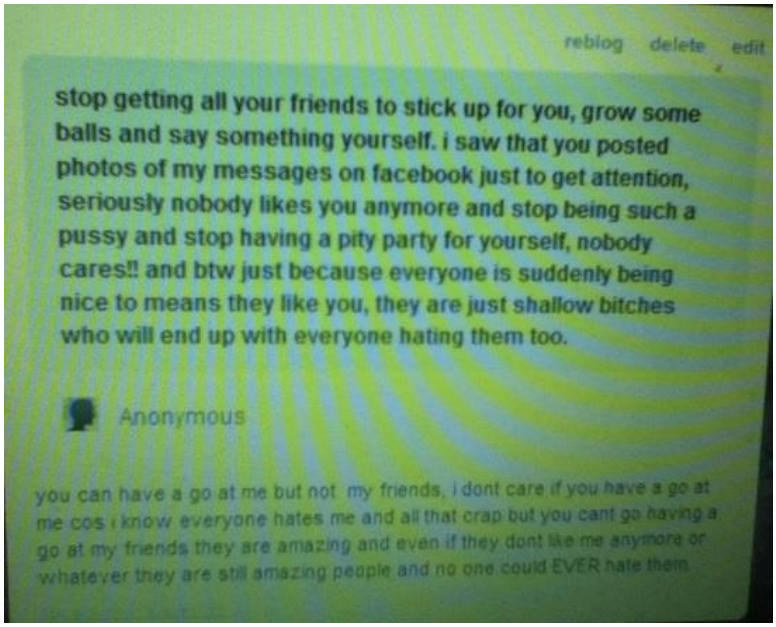


Figure 29: Second screenshot of bullying message sent to Hannah

Another bullying message was sent anonymously to Hannah, but Hannah later posted '*tumblr hate stopped* ☺'. However, Hannah received seven more anonymous bullying messages some days later, including '*just go kill yourself no one cares anymore*' and '*you are such a fucking whore*'. Despite receiving such messages, the following month Hannah posted '*turned anon back on.. honesty hour*', as well as a link to her Tumblr page.

Priya, a 16-year-old, was another young female who experienced bullying online. She posted a screenshot (see Figure 30, below) from the website Anonymous which showed she had been bullied. Like the messages Hannah received, these bullying comments included emotionally violent statements and incitements to suicide. Priya captioned the screenshot '*Well this is cool. Thanks for that Anonymous, thanks a lot*'.

Figure 30: Screenshot of bullying messages sent to Priya

Two other young females, friends of participants in this research, received bullying messages online. A friend of Jess posted a screenshot of an anonymous bullying message that read:

> *you are a dirty fucking filthy whore, what you did to mia was disgusting, I hope you rot in hell you disgusting little cunt, you are the fattest, rudest, ugliest fucking bushy, your such a sweater, get the fuck over yourself, you are not cool at all, everyone hates you, go jump. <3*

Jess' friend posted her thoughts on receiving this message: '*Write me off as hard as you want, I honestly don't give a fuck, but as soon as you bring suicide into the equation, that's just plain fucked*'.

A friend of Sarah's had received bullying messages from a girl known to her. One of these was posted to Facebook along with the name of the bully and her profile picture. The message was: '*just remember love, your going to be coming to my school next year. Wouldn't want to hate to come would you.*'. Sarah responded to the post with: '*HAHA HER SCHOOL? HATE COMING TO YOU?... it's funny because she should be the one who should be scared. Stupid bitch*'.

In another example, on a 'Most beautiful teen contest' page that Ruby had liked, bullying through trolling was evident. A photo was entered: a close-up of a smiling teenage girl. This was accompanied by a story explaining how she had suffered a brain haemorrhage and passed

away. The photo had received 907 likes, four shares and 188 comments. The comments were overwhelmingly positive; as people who knew her shared memories, others offered their condolences and reflected on her beauty. However, one Facebook user chose to interrupt the positive comments by questioning the age of the girl, commenting on the amount of makeup she wore, and referring to her breasts. A second Facebook user questioned the legitimacy of the claim that she had suffered a brain haemorrhage, cursed and made insensitive comments, about the girl in the photo as well as the people who had commented. Conversation between this user and the young person who posted the picture escalated and ended with this bullying comment:

> *Maybe I am a bully, maybe I feed off this shit because I know that someone will be mad, Did it ever occur to you that I'm trying to get a reaction out of someone? Hmmm since your being bullied, Cut yourself! Please do it Vertically not Horizontal, you might live if you do it wrong…Fuck you, fuck the dead girl, fuck her parents, fuck your parents, fuck the people that like this photo, fuck the chick that got bullied and cut herself, hell fuck your parents for paying for the Internet that you are using to read this*

Only two participants' pages revealed that they may be the instigators of bullying behaviour. Both participants were 15-year-olds, one male and one female. Charlie posted a screenshot of a message to him from Habbo stating that he had been banned for engaging in bullying behaviour. He attached to the screenshot the comment '*Making friends online and off...*'. Penny demonstrated that she engaged in bullying behaviour, writing: '*Curry curry!*' on a Facebook friend's wall. Another young person then commented: '*you are so racist Penny, for one Talei is Fijian, not indian and two benny likes curry, so that shit doesn't fly. Grow up hay?*'; and another: '*Real mature*'. On another occasion. Penny posted mean-spirited statuses, involving cursing and racist overtones about a girl whom she identified by name. Others also made comments, such as: '*This is racist*'; '*This thread is horrible*'; and '*You should delete this*'. Three days later, all statuses and comments were deleted from Penny's page. In a third example, Penny posted the comment: '*If I was Mikahla Odonnell I would of killed myself already*'. Interestingly, even though Penny clearly engaged in bullying behaviour, she posted the status: '*If you lie bully hate or anything mean, don't bother being my friend because you disgust me*'.

Six participants, five female and one male, acknowledged the serious effects of cyber-bullying, having either experienced it themselves or having friends who had experienced it. This differed from participants' opinions of fighting, which many believed had little effect on young people's general lives. Marko shared that he had a friend who was '*badly affected by cyber-bullying*', and Robyn warned that online bullying could lead to self-harm:

> *it can be horrible because of online bullying . It can lead to teens hurting themselves... I've had friends hurt themselves because of it and friends of friends die... My friends have stopped now. But they were cutting and things like that. They have moved on now because of getting help*

Robyn went on to explain that these friends still used Facebook, as it was a vital communication tool, but that they were warier of doing so. Also acknowledging the serious effects of cyber-bullying, Izzy posted this message to a friend who had passed away after committing suicide due to bullying: '*Hope Everything Is Perfect Up There For You, Bianca. Almost Two Years Since You Left. :x R.I.P*'.

Two female participants shared their experiences of bullying during the interviews. Both were 17 years old. Sinead described how fights on Facebook had affected her emotional health and had led to self-harming: '*I was turning nasty with the commotion about facebook and I was also becoming depressed and had done self-harming from it. Which was quite stupid of me*'. Another, Georgina, spoke of how her experience of being badly bullied at school had made her consider how she interacts with others on Facebook, particularly regarding who she accepts as a friend:

> *I'm kinda paranoid because I've been bullied badly xD People verbally abused me for my personality. It made me very sad. It was mostly primary school. I cried a lot. Wouldn't say I coped. I still got bullied a lot in year 7 and 8, but it stopped at some point in year 9. People still deliberately insult me, but it's nowhere near common enough to be called bullying anymore.*

Public slut-shaming

> *Sorry bitch, there's no delete history for your vagina… #gaby. (Ryan)*
>
> > *Gaby Morris is nice (friend of Ryan)*
> >
> > *Gaby is one of the most amazing girls I've ever met, and people that don't personally know her need to shut the fuck up thinking they know her, you don't have a clue what person she is or whats happened in the past so shut up. (friend of Ryan)*
> >
> > *When she hates you for no reason, well… I hate her back… and I don't feel I was speaking to you either (Ryan)*

Ryan is a 16-year-old male from Perth, Western Australia. He attends school and works at McDonalds. Ryan has 1,653 friends on Facebook. The above post demonstrates how young people can easily speak negatively about peers in the form of slut-shaming, another practice of young people collectively making and taking risks on Facebook. Interestingly, two of Ryan's Facebook friends came to Gaby's defence, although Ryan was quick to dismiss these comments and confirm his dislike of Gaby. Other public slut-shaming comments were seen, such as:

> *Gangers on facebook think there cool by posting on peoples wall and insulting them. I've got three words for you close your legs (Niko)*
>
> *i called some random celebrity a slut the other day and my mum grounded me (Lucas)*

One example of slut-shaming by a group of young people was observed. Ashley's Facebook page was linked to an account named 'Stphilips Snitch'. Ashley, and many other school friends, had connected to this account and were engaging in public conversations on the Facebook wall. The person who had created the page remained anonymous and posted revealing information about people who attended the school. Many of the status updates named students and gave details of their relationships, which were often sexual in nature. For example: '*jarrod ford lost his virginity to jasmine nauman. yuck*'; and another which was about Ashley read: '*Ashley coped a ten incher. Wow :-O*'.

Sexualised bullying of females

> *There's two seedy guys sitting across from me talking about how they find girls on facebook and send them pictures of themselves naked. Some people are just so messed up… (Katie)*

> *He fuckin inboxine sayin hey bub get woth me give me head like yu did the other night im just like wtf! (Eve)*

A form of sexual violence, sexualised bullying of females, was evident on Facebook, as a number of the above comments attest. Sexualised bullying was a collective practice of making and taking risks on Facebook. Two instances of sexual bullying by groups of Facebook users were witnessed. Young females were the target of the comments. Here, the trolling comments came from people unknown to the victim. In one example of groups of young people on Facebook engaging in sexual violence, Simon added the Facebook identity 'Alf Stewart', a character from *Home and Away*, and reposted one of 'Alf's' screenshots of a Facebook post by a female who had written: '*whoever af stuart is on facebook, you are the biggest tosser your jokes about rape dungeons aren't funny! And being an asshole isn't cool!*'. The screenshot showed her profile picture but concealed her name. 'Alf Stewart' wrote next to the screenshot: '*Cunts fucked, Can't wait till i find this slut*'. 450 people had liked that comment, and several people had written sexually explicit and sexually violent comments underneath, including: '*she's gonna find herself waking up in chains tomorrow morning*'; '*smash the cunts back out*'; '*see how mad the slut is when I destroy her asshole*'; and '*slut need raping alf*'. All such comments were made by males.

Another strong example of sexual bullying through trolling of females was seen on Jenna's Facebook page. Jenna listed herself as going to '*TINAS 16TH PARTY*'. The eponymous Tina had set up an event for the occasion, to which Jenna was invited. It was apparent that this invitation had spread further on Facebook than Tina had intended. At the time of the researcher viewing the event, 3,653 people had been invited, 244 had listed themselves as maybe attending, and 5,572 as 'going'. On the event page were streams of comments, which began as excited comments from friends, such as '*PARTYPARTYPARTY!*', and '*cannot wait tina*'. Tina realised that more people were joining her event and stated, '*This is fucked hahahaha, why are people from all over Australia joining?*'. People showed that they were not at all connected to Tina through their comments of '*Ummm why am I invited*' and '*Who's*

Tina?'. The comments then began to change as more people connected with the event. Many of these comments were comical and sarcastic, such as '*I swear to god, if you don't have party bags, then fuck you*'. Others made drug references, such as: '*Anyone keen on heroine???*'. Numerous comments also manifested sexualised bullying:

> *You must love the cock.*
>
> *Everyone wants to put you on the spit*
>
> *Are gobbies free or do we have to pay?*
>
> *Okay, so basically I just have a huge as dick, 16 inches. More details will be visible closer to your face. Obviously bring your own rufies and shit, if you want plus ones just add them to this orgy. My anus is open and I can have up to 600 people cumming, so if I get more then I will have to suck people. Xoxo*

Conclusion

This chapter concludes the presentation of the study's findings. The three findings chapters have presented a complex story about young people and risk on Facebook. The first showed how young people engage in everyday practices on Facebook, the second that young people 'know' and 'unknow' risks, as revealed through practices of recognising, reframing and normalising them, and this final chapter has shown how young people engage with risk through 'making' and 'taking' risks. These practices were shown to be of three kinds: connection practices; content practices; and collective practices.

Given the complex environment that this research focused on, the process of analysing the data was also complex. The data gathered was expansive, and involved strong language and images. The conceptualisation process was intricate. For example, data that initially looked harmful or risky was not interpreted by young people as such. I also needed to consider if the language young people used was intended to be positive or negative. The context for this research is multifaceted, but I developed a framework to provide an account of young people's engagement with risk on Facebook that would manage this complexity. The next chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature.

Chapter Eight: Discussion

This research was youth-centred and informed by the sociocultural theory of risk. It has revealed important knowledge on the topic of young people and risk on social media, and has done so from the perspective of young people. I have argued throughout this thesis that the standard, adult-centric narrative does not present a full account of young people's experiences online, and that what is missing are young people's voices, and an understanding of risk as having cultural aspects.

Therefore, I asked the research question: 'How do young people engage with risk through their everyday practices on Facebook?'. I also posed three sub questions:

- What are the everyday practices of young people on Facebook?
- How do young people understand risk in their everyday practices on Facebook?
- How do young people interact with risk in their everyday practices on Facebook?

In answer to these questions, I found that young people engaged with risk on Facebook as an everyday experience of their presence online. Young people were actively engaged in their own risk practices on Facebook of 'knowing and unknowing' and 'making and taking' risks.

I begin this chapter with a discussion focused on understanding young people's engagement with risk. This first half of the chapter is divided into three parts, one for each findings chapter: everyday practices of young people on Facebook; young people 'know and unknow' risks through everyday practices on Facebook; and young people 'make and take' risks through everyday practices on Facebook.

I then discuss the meanings of young people's engagement with risk on Facebook. Young people's engagement with risk through everyday practices reflects how ideas about risk on Facebook are co-constructed, which is intertwined with identity formation and the need for belonging. Importantly, the results of the study illustrate that violence was an everyday experience for participants, and that risk practices were gendered.

Understanding young people's engagement with risk on Facebook

This first half of the chapter provides an understanding of young people's engagement with risk on Facebook. This discussion aligns with the three findings chapters and discusses the everyday practices of young people and how through these practices young people 'know and unknow' risks and 'make and take' risks. While this discussion utilises the categories of 'know and unknow' and 'make and take', they do overlap and are intertwined with each other.

Young people showed that they 'know and unknow' risks through everyday practices on Facebook. The young people showed that they 'know' risk through recognising risk and this informed decisions they made about their Facebook use. Young people recognised privacy risks of sharing identifying information and the content of conversations. They made decisions about the methods through which to communicate on Facebook. They also recognised risks to their friends mental well-being on Facebook and recognised the risks of online bullying. These were all examples of young people 'knowing' risk. However, despite 'knowing' risk to privacy on Facebook, young people also showed they chose to share personal information on Facebook and this was a normal part of young people/s everyday practices. Young people showed that they 'unknow' risk on Facebook as they had reframed adult-centric conceptions of risks. This 'unknowing' of risk was evident as young people: reframed name calling and belittling through fighting as insignificant; reframed language and behaviour commonly regarded to be risky, namely 'hacking', 'stalking' and 'raping'; and through everyday practices behaviours that are commonly regarded as risky such as self-harm and violence was normalised by young people.

Young people showed how they 'make and take' risks through connection practices, content practices and collective practices. Connection practices showed young people taking risks through connecting with friends, holding weak ties with Facebook friends and making random connections with unknown people. Through content practices, young people both made and took risks. For example, young people who chose to share sexually suggestive photos of themselves were both making and taking risks by sharing these images. Collective practices of young people also involved making and taking risk which are intertwined. For example, the instances of online bullying showed how multiple young people can both make and take risk in a collective experience. In these examples, the bullies were making and

taking risks through their bullying behaviour and posting of bullying comments. The young people who experienced online bullying took risks through sharing their experiences on Facebook. Their Facebook friends then also took risks through publicly supporting the victims of online bullying.

Everyday practices of young people on Facebook

The findings showed that young people engaged with Facebook on an everyday basis. Using Facebook has become a common experience for young people, and is so engrained in their lives that they spend copious amounts of time in the online space. Literature on young people using social media has shown that it is a normal and natural part of their world (Belsey 2008; Price & Dalgleish 2010; Ralph et al. 2011; Wigand, Wood & Mande 2010). Young people showed that being present, visible and accessible to their friends on Facebook was important to them. As boyd (2007b, p. 1) highlights, it is simply their presence that allows teens to build relationships and stay connected. Mahony (2013) uses the acronyms FOMO (the 'fear of missing out') and FONK (the 'fear of not knowing') to describe young people's motivation to constantly use social media. This was reflected by the young people in this research, who also expressed the feeling that not being present would result in 'missing out' and being 'oblivious' to what is being said on Facebook.

Using social media was part of their normal everyday experience, and was used popularly and constantly on a variety of devices and in a variety of locations. boyd (2014, p. 7) also highlights how participating in social media has become 'normative', and this, too, was manifested by young people in this research. Facebook was described as being intertwined with other aspects of their lives, rather than as something separate. This is consistent with assertions made by Goncalves, Perra and Vespignani (2011, p. 1), Gyor (2017, p. 132) and Lincoln and Robards (2017, p. 527), all of whom describe the blurring of physical and online realities as the online and offline worlds seamlessly blend together to form the social worlds we live in. And, as boyd (2014, p. 24) states: 'The internet mirrors, magnifies, and makes more visible the good, bad, and ugly of everyday life'.

As part of their everyday practices, young people managed their accounts, their connections, and the content they shared. Accounts were created, deleted, and deactivated. Connections

with friends were managed through openly deleting and blocking friends. As Madden et al. (2013, p. 9) highlight, an integral part of privacy and reputation management for young people using social media is friend curation, through which young people friend, unfriend and block as privacy management techniques. Young people also curated content, as they were able to delete posts, comments, and photos. Robards (2012, p. 394) describes the 'digital trace' created as young people use social media and narratives are performed, commented on, recorded and stored.

An everyday practice of young people was being connected to others within the community of Facebook. The experience of community has changed with social media, and we are now able to connect to our friends, family, and strangers in a split second (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010, p. 10; Liamputtong 2009, p. 250). Being constantly connected to others was shown to be important to young people. Connections allow for plans to be made, conversations to be had, and facilitate discussion about school and work. Participating in group trends or chain actions was a common everyday practice of young people. A large majority of young people engaged in this behaviour, particularly the 'like/dislike' and 'tbh' trends. These everyday practices highlight how young people show a need for belonging.

Young people used Facebook to express their sense of self through the content of the text and photos they shared with friends. France (2000, p. 323) highlights how identity construction is affected by social and cultural factors. Young people showed how their construction of their identity through everyday practices was done in the social and cultural space of Facebook. A part of identity expression by young people was to 'talk about real issues', which involved supporting and highlighting campaigns and charities. These practices helped to showcase young people's identity on Facebook. Social media clearly provides a space for young people to express their identity. This is consistent with previous literature, which also acknowledges the identity seeking, revealing, expression and management that young people undertake on social media (Kietzmann et al. 2011, p. 243; Lenhart et al. 2015, p. 58; Livingstone & Haddon 2009, p. 10; Madden et al. 2013, p. 9; McLoughlin & Lee 2007, p. 667).

The engagement with everyday practices showed how these practices can promote and enhance feelings of belonging among young people. The formation of identity was clearly a part of these everyday practices, which also demonstate how everyday practices are collective.

Young people ‘know and unknow’ risks through everyday practices on Facebook

By applying a sociocultural lens to this youth-centred research, it was possible to explore understandings of risk with young people. Young people showed that they ‘know and unknow’ risk through recognising, reframing and normalising it. These are young people’s understandings of risk in the situated context of Facebook. These ways in which young people showed ‘knowing and unknowing’ risk demonstrated that risk is co-constructed through their social interactions.

Young people showed how they ‘know’ risks on Facebook through recognising, and this recognition informed the decisions they made. For example, young people made decisions about the privacy of their accounts to minimise risk. The overwhelming majority held private accounts, which limited the information shown to non-friends. This finding echoes Holmes (2009, p. 1181), who highlights the agency of young people in protecting themselves through making their profiles inaccessible to people not categorised as friends. Young people in this research were aware of Facebook’s privacy settings, but many were relaxed about them and did not regularly act in this area. This is consistent with research by Christofides, Muise and Desmarais (2010, p. 7), who also found that while people are aware of privacy settings and feel confident in using them, few choose to do so. Three of the 73 young people in this research were the exception, and showed a strong sense of management in regularly checking their settings and making changes as needed.

Young people demonstrated that they had a clear recognition of privacy risks, and this awareness informed their decisions. This finding is in opposition to the perception highlighted by Myers (2009, para. 1) that some people do nothing to protect their privacy online. In this research, conscious choices were made by young people about disclosing information on Facebook, and they demonstrated privacy considerations regarding identifying information and the content of conversations. This echoes research by Holmes (2009, p. 1181), who also demonstrated that young people considered the issue of sharing personal information online, and were discerning about what they chose to share. Young people made decisions about the methods through which to communicate on Facebook, showing that they ‘know’ risks to privacy. Such decisions were made based on the nature of the conversation, and with consideration of who might view it. Young people were acutely

aware of the public nature of wall posts, and used this mode for less personal and more casual communications. Chats provided young people with a more private channel; there were many instances of conversations moving from public wall posts to private chats. This was done to protect personal information, when making plans, and to support friends emotionally. Young people also used their settings to adjust the amount of information different friends were able to see. There was some acknowledgement among participants of the practice of making private conversations public through copy and pasting, and this was also seen to occur. Likewise, there was evidence of emails being shared with people outside the original conversation.

Concerns about the risk to privacy on social media are well engrained in the literature and in the wider society (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010; Greene 2010; Lenhart et al. 2015; Livingstone & Haddon 2009; Madden et al. 2013; Myers 2009; Pieters & Krupin 2010; Staksrud & Livingstone 2009). However, this research shows that, in practice, young people recognise privacy risks and consciously choose behaviours to minimise them. Such practices are reflective of Robards (2010, p. 1) assertion that young people can develop strategies for managing their online privacy and social interactions. Young people also recognised risks to their friends' mental well-being on Facebook. They did this by responding to negative status updates with supportive comments, by posting positive comments onto friends' walls, and by posting supportive comments in support of friends who may be experiencing grief, loss, or self-harm. These actions, too, were redolent of risk recognition and of young people 'knowing' risks on social media.

Despite recognising privacy risks, young people also showed that they chose to share personal information. My research showed that sharing personal information was beneficial to facilitating further communication and group events by young people. This aligns with assertions that individuals' popularity is closely linked with their level of information disclosure (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais 2010, p. 17), and that the level of disclosure online can affect your online relationships (Henderson & Gilding 2004, p. 501). Sharing such information was a normal part of young people's everyday practices on Facebook.

Sharing personal information such as Skype names, mobile numbers and home addresses is commonly considered to be a privacy risk (White, Gummerum & Hanoch 2015), but in this research, despite young people showing awareness of the risks, they often freely shared personal information. Myers (2009, para. 1) highlights that too much personal information

can be available to others online, but, as Robards (2010, p. 4) notes, privacy standards have shifted; it was once common to withhold your name online, but today it is a standard requirement to share your name on social media.

Choosing to publicise locations was an element of young people's Facebook use. At times this was clearly intentional as details were given to friends using public means. At other times this was less intentional, such as by uploading images in which addresses were visible. Although seen infrequently, the maps feature also revealed locations through the act of tagging. There were no negative consequences seen when young people did this. However, the capacity to ascertain the outcomes in more detail was not within the scope of the research. These findings were at odds with the research of Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 11), who showed that young people drew the line at sharing home and school addresses. However, as Madden et al. (2013, p. 2) remind us, social media is designed to encourage the sharing of information. Madden et al. (2013, p. 3) found that most young people share their school name (71 per cent), the city/town they live in (71 per cent), and that many disclose their mobile number (20 per cent). More recent research by the Australian Government (2016) shows that nine per cent of teens shared phone numbers and addresses on social media. The present study found that sharing of home addresses, mostly through the act of tagging locations, was slightly more common, with 12 per cent of young people doing so. Young people also shared their phone numbers on their profile pages, and, in addition, 15 per cent shared their mobile numbers on public Facebook pages created to serve, in essence, as telephone directories.

Online bullying was recognised as a risk by young people, who described it as having potentially serious effects. They showed an understanding of the real effects of bullying, which they identified as including: family breakdowns; physical fights; self-harm; emotional ill-health; depression; and suicide. While Mason (2008) and Espelage and Goldblum (2014) similarly identify bullying as affecting academic and social lives, causing emotional distress, and possibly leading to violence and suicide, Duong and Bradshaw (cited in Espelage & Goldblum 2014, para. 2) stress that, despite the prevalence of bullying, most children who are bullied do not become suicidal. The bullying behaviour seen in this study is in line with research by Pieters and Krupin (2010, p. 14), who assert that young people often witness bullying online, but that relatively few have been bullied themselves.

Young people in this research demonstrated an assessment of risk, described by France (2000, p. 319) as the cognitive process of making rational choices about their behaviour.

Dror, Katona and Mungur (1998, p. 68) state that decision-making about risks involves estimating probability, weighing alternatives and judging outcomes. However, such descriptions of risk assessment treat the conceptualisation of risk as an object. Risk, as recognised by young people, was a social construct. Risk was recognised within the cultural context of Facebook, and in relation to young people's social interactions.

Young people reframed adult-centric conceptions of risks, and thought differently about such risks on Facebook. This practice of reframing shows an 'unknowing' of risks. Name-calling and belittling through 'fighting' were done publicly, and many had witnessed this behaviour. Many participants noted, though, that the arguments and fighting on Facebook remained online and had little effect on other aspects of young people's lives. Young people described this fighting as non-serious; it was just another part of the shifting dynamics of young people's relations. This echoes boyd (2014, p. 137) and Marwick and boyd (2014, p. 1197), who describe how practices that might be defined by adults as bullying or relational aggression are understood differently by young people. boyd (2014, p. 137) highlights how young people use the language of 'gossip and rumors, pranking and punking, and, above all, drama'. Drama is social and interpersonal, it involves conflict, and is performative (Marwick & boyd 2014, p. 1191). Young people who engage in drama are aware that they are visible to others, and often act strategically to appeal to their peers (Marwick & boyd 2014, p. 1191). Marwick and boyd (2014, p. 1195) explain that 'when teens interact using social media, conflicts often take place in front of a highly distributed networked audience of classmates and acquaintances, who can participate in situations they were not originally a part of, fostering drama'. The term 'drama', as boyd (2014, p. 137) describes, is used by young people to describe various forms of interpersonal conflict where those involved are part of a broader and normative social process (boyd 2014, p. 138). This normative social process was reflected in the data, as conflicts played out through 'fighting' were reframed as insignificant and were considered by young people to have little effect on their lives.

This research showed that young people also reframed language and behaviour commonly regarded to be risky. Young people had developed their own risk language, and words that commonly hold negative connotations of risk were conceptualised in new ways, thereby resulting in an 'unknowing' of risks. The words 'hacking', 'stalking' and 'raping' were used in non-threatening ways; they had taken on new meanings in the context of young people on Facebook. Hacking is commonly regarded to be an intrusive, unwanted and potentially

damaging online risk. Only two instances of hacking in the original sense were described by young people; most used the term in a non-threatening way. Hacking, as described and used by young people on Facebook, was done in a fun and comical way between friends. Friends were seen to 'hack' friends' pages in a playful way, and parents of young people also engaged in these actions. Stalking was also referred to by young people as if it were non-threatening or harmless; in fact it was used positively, describing the act of looking at or checking in with a friend's Facebook page, and to describe a keen interest in a friend's Facebook activity. Rape had also been reframed on Facebook, by both male and females, describing actions with far less harmful associations. The word was used to describe repeated or large amounts of activity on a Facebook page through comments or likes that resulted in numerous notifications.

Adult-centric views of young people and social media consider some online behaviours to be risky. In this research, young people did not consider these behaviours in the same way. They had normalised them through their everyday practices, and in the process had come to 'unknow' common risks. Sharing these images/words has made them a normal part of young people's social media use.

In this research, young people reflected on self-harm as if it were ordinary, normalising this kind of conversation. Photos and images were used in addition to text to detail self-harm. On occasions this was done in a seemingly comical way. Literature about online risk has described depictions or descriptions of self-harming and suicide as a risk to young people (Biddle et al. 2008; Daine et al. 2013; Jacob, Evans & Scourfield 2017; Mitchell & Ybarra 2007; Whitlock, Powers & Eckenrode 2006), but this behaviour was normalised by young people in this research.

Young people also normalised violence through Facebook posts. Violently aggressive language was used to be humorous, on occasions, and young people uploaded violent images and videos. Both males and females engaged in this behaviour, although the females presented this more sporadically and the males more repeatedly. Encountering violent content online is viewed as harmful to young people (Livingstone & Haddon 2009; Staksrud & Livingstone 2009), but, in this research, such violent postings were made 'in jest' and produced no negative responses or repercussions, thereby reinforcing the normalisation of violent postings. Posting sexually violent material was also normalised, and attracted many 'likes' from friends. Offhand threats of aggression were made by and to young people. Posts

with violent overtones and language were used to express anger or upset. Actions to shame others were also normalised. Words and images were used to do this, and the targets of the comments were often named publicly. Again, these postings were made by young people in a casual, and sometimes comical, way. These behaviours received few responses that would indicate disapproval, revealing their normalisation.

The practice of normalising risk, as discussed above, shows that young people do not see risk in the same way as adults. While this normalisation of risk occurs, I do not argue that it is okay. Fundamentally, risks have been re-written by young people on Facebook. Online risks have previously been conceptualised in terms of categories of risk: content risks, contact risks, and conduct risks (Hasebrink et al. 2009; Livingstone & Haddon 2009; Livingstone & Smith 2014; Staksrud & Livingstone 2009). This research has shown that, through normalisation, many of the content, contact and conduct risks, highlighted by academics from adult-centric viewpoints, are rendered insignificant by young people; by this means, young people 'unknow' risks.

Young people 'make and take' risks through everyday practices on Facebook

Connection practices

Young people showed how they 'make and take' risks through their everyday practices on Facebook. Connection practices were one way in which young people 'made and took' risks. Their connection practices showed that, in addition to known friends, young people made connections with 'friends of friends', and held weak ties and random connections with Facebook friends. The relationships seen in this research reproduced research by boyd (2007a, 2007b, 2008, 2010) that highlights that online relationships are an extension to relationships already in existence. However, this study extends this thinking to note relationships that exist and yet are weak associations. Giddens (1990, p. 119) describes how the meaning of friendships has changed from the opposing terms of friend and enemy to the more neutral friend and acquaintance. This research suggests that the distinction between friend and acquaintance that Giddens describes has been blurred in the context of social media. Taking these risks (of connecting with friends, holding weak ties, and making random connections) showed no negative outcomes for young people, and these practices show that

young people choose to take the commonly recognised risk of connecting with unknown people online (Livingstone & Haddon 2009; Pieters & Krupin 2010; White, Gummerum & Hanoch 2015).

In this research, two female participants described forming strong relationships that began as Facebook connections. These examples showed that extending relationships made on Facebook to other aspects of life resulted in positive outcomes. Meeting people online and then continuing the relationship in person is described in the literature as a serious risk (Livingstone & Haddon 2009; Staskrud & Livingstone 2009). However, my evidence parallels research by Livingstone and Helsper (2007) and Staksrud and Livingstone (2009), who also found that most young people that met with an online friend in person had a positive experience. The risk taking by young people to further relationships with people met online is at odds with the assertion by Furedi (2002) that every person with whom we interact, stranger or acquaintance, must be treated with caution.

Connection practices involving making and taking risks were seen as young people used Facebook to affirm their friendships. It was common for young people to categorise friends as ‘family’, and to post affirming messages to each other. Romantic relationships were also made public, and young people made and took risks through public posting of the details of their relationships. As Robards and Lincoln (2016, p. 2) state: ‘Social network sites play a key role in understanding contemporary relationships’. Facebook is a key site through which relationships are mediated, and public declarations on Facebook can have an impact on relationships in other realms (Robards & Lincoln 2016, p. 4). Robards and Lincoln (2016, p. 9) assert that publicising romantic relationships on Facebook has ‘clearly entered into a popular, normative understanding of how romantic relationships progress and are marked out by rites of passage, especially for young users’. In this research, these connection practices of affirming friendships and making romantic relationships public were clearly actions of belonging and reflections of identity by young people.

Content practices

Young people asserted themselves on Facebook, showing identity formation online. Through posts, young people expressed and defended themselves, which involved making and taking risks. Young people used Facebook as a place to express themselves through both short and

long texts. Posts reflecting grief and loss were also seen as a further practice of identity expression online by young people. Further, through content practices of ‘making and taking’ risks, some young people chose to share sexually suggestive photos of themselves. None of these instances resulted in negative outcomes; rather, they received likes from Facebook friends and positive comments. Literature describes sharing risky images and sexting as a risky activity to engage in online (Deutrom 2014a; Deutrom 2014b; Livingstone & Haddon 2009; Ziniak 2014), but my research showed that through taking this risk, positive outcomes were experienced. This was a finding specific to this research, however, the capacity to ascertain the outcomes in more detail was not within the scope of this research. There may have been ‘off-line’ consequences that would not have been evident on Facebook or in the interview. There also could may have been consequences in other online spaces, such as private chats, that were not able to be viewed during data collection.

Collective practices

Through collective practices of risk, it was apparent that risk on Facebook was not a solo experience. These risks were created and experienced by young people in the context of groups. They were created, directed towards, and witnessed by young people.

When young people witnessed fighting in the form of argumentative banter, others within the group responded. Interjecting in conversations with comments was common. This defence of friends showed young people acting in moral ways to attempt to show their support and defuse situations. When interjections were made, more often than not this resulted in the fight ending. Likewise, when young people were victimised through online bullying, others responded. Young people presented a moral stance against bullying. In these scenarios, when risk was witnessed, numbers of young people joined together to show distaste at the victimisation and to challenge the comments made. Groups of young people reacted strongly to instances of bullying, sending a clear message they had no tolerance for this behaviour. They rallied behind the young people who experienced bulling with numerous supportive comments.

Concerns about young people being subjected to cyber-bullying in online environments have been documented in the literature (Campbell 2005; Dooley, Pyzalski & Cross 2009; Shariff 2005). However, there were only two major instances of bullying seen in the data. These

examples involved bullying messages that were repetitive, and contained name-calling, belittling language and incitements to suicide. This is similar to research by Price and Dalgleish (2010, p. 57), in that the bullying experienced by participants in this research included name-calling, abuse, harassment and threats of physical harm. What differed in this research was the participants overcoming the embarrassment and public humiliation identified by Price and Dalgleish (2010, p. 57) through sharing their bullying experiences with their Facebook friends. In this research, bullying occurred on sites other than Facebook, such as Tumblr. This is likely to be due to the 'perceived anonymity' (Price & Dalgleish 2010, p. 51) that sites such as Tumblr offer, which Facebook does not allow without the creation of a fake profile. Reeckman and Cannard (2009, p. 42) and Blackman (2014) highlight how such anonymity provides bullies with a sense of power and control. While the bullying was originally done anonymously and directed at individuals, the individuals moved this risk to a group context by publicly sharing the bullying posts. Evidence through screenshots was shared by the victims of bullying, and these posts were met with overwhelming support from friends. When harm was experienced through bullying, power and control were shifted away from the bully through Facebook by victims calling out the bully, sharing the bullying messages, and gaining support from friends.

Through collective practices, young people showed that they can choose to act in moral ways. Young people responded to the risk they witnessed, which clearly reflected a moral response about risk online. This finding supports literature on young people as acting with morality (Britton 2015; Frankel 2012; Holland et al. 2000; Pasupathi & Wainryb 2010; Recchia et al. 2015; Sharpe & Thomson 2005; Thomson & Holland 2002), which has also found that young people act morally. The participants reflected the description given by Recchia et al. (2015, p. 864) of morality involving distinctions between right and wrong, good and bad, do and do not.

In this research, young people's engagement on Facebook reflected the understanding of morality that Hookway (2011, 2012) provides: morality is self-created, based in ethical encounters with others, and is connected to feelings of authenticity and of values. Young people's use of Facebook is largely an autonomous activity, and young people were enacting their moral agency through collective practices of risk making and taking. These practices supported the regulation of the developing moral self, and support the idea of young people as moral agents.

The enactment of moral agency by young people detailed above helps to dissolve the perception of young people as vulnerable, innocent, 'at risk' beings. Instead, they present as moral beings, making conscious decisions about how to engage on Facebook considering risk online. More often than not, young people demonstrated moral action. When instances of immorality (acting in problematic ways) were seen, others responded in moral ways through collectively making and taking risks.

While Price and Dalgleish (2010, p. 52) are correct in asserting that online bullying may be more severe than traditional forms due to the 'wider audience in which public humiliation or embarrassment can occur', this research shows that online bullying can also provide a wider base of support to the victim to help override the negativity. As young people who had experienced bullying shared their experiences with Facebook friends, they received copious amounts of moral support through comments. This can be viewed as an example of what Giddens (1990, p. 35) termed 'calculated risks', making choices in light of an awareness of risk and of 'acceptable risks', where danger is minimised and trust is played out. Here, young people made calculated risks to act in ways to support their friends, and took acceptable risks, trusting that their actions would help the situation.

An empowered sense of self can be supported on Facebook. Instances of bullying showed that while young people can experience harm on Facebook, they can also experience empowerment. The young people who were victimised through bullying chose to share the bullying messages they received. This resulted in copious amounts of supportive comments from friends. The actions of those victimised, coupled with the supportive comments received, helped to shift power from the bully back to the victim. This showed young people gaining an empowered sense of self. It also provided evidence of how, when something negative happens online, young people can reframe the situation and turn it into something positive.

Slut-shaming and sexualised bullying were also collective practices that involved making and taking risks on Facebook. Young people were publicly shamed for their sexual activity, and there was one instance of a group being deliberately set up to slut-shame young people. This group involved young people from a single school posting information of a sexual nature about other young people. Sexualised bullying of females was seen in the form of groups of people making sexualised comments, which were explicit and violent, towards others.

Meanings of young people's engagement with risk on Facebook

The first half of this chapter has provided an understanding of young people's engagement with risk on Facebook. This second half discusses the *meanings* of young people's engagement with risk on Facebook. Young people's engagement with risk through everyday practices reflects how ideas about risk on Facebook are co-constructed, intertwined with identity formation and the need for belonging. In addition, the results of this research illustrate that violence was an everyday experience for participants, and that risk practices were gendered.

Collective practices of co-constructing risk

A key revelation of this research is the need to understand risk as being co-constructed by young people through collective practices. This finding reflects ideas within the cultural theory of risk (Douglas 1985; Douglas 1992; Douglas & Wildavsky 1982) and assertions made by academics that risk perception is situated within a social and cultural context (Boholm 1996; France 2000; Lupton 1999a; Rippl 2002; Tansey & Riordan 1999; Tulloch & Lupton 2003). Everyday practices on Facebook are collective practices. Social media is an interactive space, and through collective practices, risk is co-constructed by young people. Young people demonstrated 'knowing and unknowing' risks, which shows the collective practice of co-constructing risk from the perspective of young people. Understandings of risk in this research differ from the adult-centric understandings that have dominated discussions of young people and social media.

Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 6) argue that the social principles that guide behaviour affect judgement on which dangers should be most feared, which risks are worth taking and who should take them. Lupton (1999a, p. 39) describes how, from a cultural perspective, dangers are selected for attention and designated as risks for reasons that make sense to a culture based on its shared values and concerns. In this research, young people made and took risks as collective practices. France (2000, p. 318) also note that risk and risk taking are products of social construction. These everyday practices form the social principles that guide young people's everyday behaviour. Young people do not make and take risks in isolation from others; Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, p. 80) also highlight that people are not isolated

individuals – and in risk perception, people act less as individuals and more as social beings. This highlights the communal conception of risk.

Dominant risk theories describe risk as an object or a thing. Risk is described as something that exists independently to which we are all vulnerable. Douglas (1985, p. 1) asserts that a very significant body of work views risk perception as an individual rather than a social phenomenon. Drawing on the cultural theory of risk (Douglas 1985; Douglas 1992; Douglas & Wildavsky 1982), I considered risk as a social process, and sought to explore its cultural dimensions. The cultural theory of risk argues that perception of risk is a social process, and this was evident in this research as young people co-constructed ideas about risk through their collective practices. This finding highlights that risk is not a static thing. Risk can be understood in various ways, and this research illustrated risk as it is understood and experienced by young people.

In practice on Facebook, young people are not only 'at risk', but young people are also co-creating risk through collective practices. This is important to consider as the narrative of young people online is often focused on their vulnerability. However, through a sociocultural perspective, this research shows that young people construct and engage with risk much more fluidly. A good deal of literature focuses on young people being an 'at risk' group (Jackson & Scott 1999; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998). Young people are described to be an 'at risk' group in need of protection by adults (Brown & Penney 2014; Jackson & Scott 1999; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998; Sharland 2006). In addition, young females are even more 'at risk' (Batchelor 2007; Brown & Penney 2014; Laurendeau & Adams 2010; Scott, Jackson & Backett-Milburn 1998). However, this research shows the importance of considering young people as not only 'at risk', but rather as actively engaged in practices of risk on Facebook. This finding adds another dimension to the narrative of young people in the online world, highlighting that their positioning as vulnerable online has been too simplistic.

Identity formation and the need for belonging

Young people's everyday practices and practices of risk on Facebook are intertwined with identity formation and the need for belonging. Practices in this vein included young people sharing their sense of self, talking about things that were important to them with friends, and

sharing content. This sharing of identity, as Harris (2005, p. 51) described, showed a window into the inner lives of people. Young people's everyday practices that showed identity formation on Facebook were constructed by young people themselves, which aligns with research by Robards (2013, p. 218) and boyd and Ellison (2008, p. 219). Robards (2013, p. 218) states that 'identity is constructed and performed' online, and this was evident in the research. However, young people also undertook identity construction collectively through social interactions. Young people's identity formation was also seen in their making and taking risks on Facebook, particularly through their content practices. These findings echo arguments made by Sharland (2006, p. 260) that risk taking is characteristically bound up with the development of young people's identities. Existing literature has also highlighted how expressive forms of behaviour and identity seeking are done on social media (Lenhart et al. 2015, p. 58; Madden et al. 2013, p. 8; McLoughlin & Lee 2007, p. 667). Hendry, Robards and Stanford (2017, p. 143) also highlighted 'storying self', and how Facebook creates a space in which people can present stories of self and allows for self-reflection (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 143). Research has also found that young people see self-expression as an upside of social media (Australian Government 2016). White, Wyn and Robards (2017, p. 295) explain that identity is 'about who we are, a story we are both born into and that we actively shape throughout our lives'. Technology has become a medium through which meaning and social identities are constructed, and social media is a site for identity-work (White, Wyn & Robards 2017). Young people in this research were actively shaping their identities through everyday practices on social media.

Young people demonstrated a need for belonging through much of their online everyday practices. This need for belonging supports work by Robards (2012, p. 385), who describes how participation is mandatory for young people for inclusion amongst peer groups. Robards (2010, p. 1) also describes how choosing not to engage in social media 'can often equate to social exclusion'. In this research, young people stressed their need to be visible and accessible to friends on Facebook to allow for connections to be made. As noted by Harris (2005, p. 60), young people have a strong urge to share, as it provides them with a sense of belonging. In this research, young people highlighted how they felt connected to friends through Facebook, and participated in practices, such as group trends, that enhanced their sense of belonging. Participation in group trends by young people showed young people's need to belong, to be part of something bigger than themselves and, as Harris (2005, p. 57) described, to know that they matter to the group.

The literature has shown that social media has become an important way of sustaining and strengthening social relationships and of feeling better connected to friends (Lenhart et al. 2015, p. 53; Robards 2010, p. 1). Young people also enhanced their sense of belonging by making and taking risks through connection practices. Friendships were chosen and modified, affirmed, and supported by young people in their everyday practices. Through social media young people can 'form and perform a sense of self and belonging through socialization and communication' (Robards 2012, p. 394).

While literature has shown that young people use social media to reflect identity and enhance their belonging through connections and relationships, this research highlights *how* this is done: through practices of risk. Through their everyday practices of risk, knowing and unknowing risks, and making and taking risks, young people form their online identities and create a sense of belonging on social media.

Practices of risk, which are intertwined with identity formation and the need for belonging, highlight the need for risk to be understood in positive terms. Taking risks by engaging in so-called 'risky behaviours', such as making new connections and posting sexually suggestive images, apparently had no negative repercussions. Taking risks did not automatically equate to negative outcomes, and instead positive outcomes were seen. Risk is more often conceptualised as a negative concept, especially when applied to young people online. As described by Douglas (1992, p. 24), the word 'risk' now means 'danger', and 'high risk' means 'lots of danger' in popular discourse; risk, in other words, refers only to negative outcomes. My research supports literature on the positive attributes of risk (Lupton 1999a; Lyng 1990; Neihart 1999), as demonstrated through the practice of young people actively choosing to take risks and experiencing positive outcomes.

The practice of taking risks is also related to the concept of dignity of risk (Parsons 2008). This concept has not previously been applied to the context of young people on social media. Previously, it has been used in the fields of disability and mental health, and I argue that the concept should also be applied to young people on social media. Young people should be given the dignity of risk on Facebook. As Parsons (2008, p. 28) suggests, people should be provided the opportunity to make decisions, take risks, deal with the responsibility, and learn from these actions. My research has shown young people practising these actions, and that risk taking can produce positive outcomes for them.

The positive experiences that young people gained from taking risks echo the literature on positive risk taking (Brown & Penney 2014; Hart 2017; Lyng 1990; Palmer 2002). This concept has largely been applied in the area of sport, where people take risks when engaging in high-risk sports such as mountaineering and rock-climbing (Palmer 2002). Positive risk taking through 'edgework' (Lyng 1990) has previously been applied to sports and occupations involving risk, such as firefighting and soldiering. Recently the concept has been applied to young people and the Internet. Hart (2017) showed that purposeful engagement in risky behaviour online, specifically through posting risky selfies on Tumblr, could produce positive outcomes for young people. My research has also shown evidence of 'edgework' on Facebook, where young people voluntarily engage in risk taking. Like Hart's (2017), my research also shows that posting sexually suggestive photos, which could be termed 'edgework', could provide positive experiences for young people. My research extends the concept of edgework in this context further by expanding practices of risk taking to include sharing private details, disclosing personal information, communicating openly, and making new connections online. Despite the recent research by Hart (2017), much of the previous literature about positive risk taking and 'edgework' has not been applied to young people online; a state of affairs I have attempted to rectify in this research.

Violence is an everyday experience

Communicating with violence through text and images was a major part of young people's engagement with risk through everyday practices on Facebook. An exploration of violence online was not undertaken in this research. However, it was clear from the findings that violence was threaded through many of the everyday practices of young people on Facebook.

Violence and sexual violence are often done in secret, but in this context, it is done publicly and collectively. Facebook is an interactive space, and groups of young people post, share, and witness violent content in their everyday practices. This research has shown that there is a dynamic of publicness of violence on Facebook. Postings and images containing violence were made public by young people for others to see. Fairbairn, Bivens and Dawson (2013, p. 15) state that 'social media sites are spaces where abuse and harassment occur'. Similarly, Montiel (2018, para. 17) states that social media has become a new and powerful vehicle for 'misogynistic threats and harassment'. Powell and Henry (2017, p. 2) describe how easy

access to the Internet, camera-enabled smartphones, and participation in online social networks have allowed sexual harassment, abuse and violence to occur online. boyd (2014, p. 11) highlights four affordances of social media – persistence, visibility, spreadablility and searchability – and these affordances contribute to the public nature of violence on Facebook. Violent postings remain persistent on Facebook, they are visible to broad audiences, easily shared and spread, and can be found by Facebook users.

In this research, violence was normalised by young people on Facebook. Normalisation of violence was seen in everyday practices, by both female and male participants. Powell and Henry (2107, p. 79) describe the current and disturbing 'rape culture' in the digital age. This term refers to the widely held societal norms and attitudes that condone, minimise, and normalise sexual violence against women (Powell & Henry 2017, p. 79). They argue that the practices of this culture highlight a 'collective societal tolerance, and even acceptance, of sexual violence against women' (Powell & Henry 2017, p. 80). Posts that normalised violence in this research were couched in ordinary and comical terms, contributing to such behaviour being tolerated and accepted among young people.

Risk practices are gendered

boyd (2014, p. 27) says that people do not all experience social media in the same way. In this research participants engaged with risk on social media, but this research has shown that young people's everyday practices are gendered. Gender is considered to be a social process, and encompasses the social understandings of social and sexual identities (White, Wyn & Robards 2017, p. 61).

In this research, differences were seen between females and males in relation to their engagement with risk. In regard to making and taking risks through connection practices, females were stricter about adding people they 'knew'. However, females also gave their mobile numbers out more often than males, and females also carried relationships begun on Facebook into other spaces. Giving out mobile numbers and continuing relationships formed on Facebook in other spaces showed no negative outcomes for those who chose this behaviour. It was also observed through connection practices of making and taking risks that females predominated in behaviour that affirmed their friendships online, and received many

romantic posts from males. Facebook profiles of females displayed more instances of 'fighting', which was reframed by young people as insignificant and described as 'teenage drama', although both males and females engaged in this dialogue. Marwick and boyd (2014, p. 1199) state that '[d]rama is gendered'. In the abstract, 'drama' is conceptualised, dismissively, as a 'girl thing', irrespective of the actual participants in a situation of 'drama' (Marwick & boyd 2014, p. 1199).

Females were more active than males in making and taking risks through content practices. Females made a larger number of assertive comments than males. The female participants made more expressive posts (along with two males who identified as gay or bisexual), and made more posts showing grief and loss. Gender differences were also seen in the content practice of sharing sexual photographs. Females were the sharers of such images, and thus were the target of judgement for doing so.

As discussed in the previous section, violence was an everyday part of young people's experiences on Facebook. Violent posts and violent behaviour were clearly gendered, too. Collective practices of violence through bullying, slut-shaming and sexualised bullying were all directed at females. Females were the target of these behaviours, and males were often the perpetrators. In this research, females were the victims of sexual violence through sexualised bullying online. Fairbairn, Bivens and Dawson (2013, p. 2) stress that we know little about the sexual nature of online abuse and harassment, but preliminary information shows that young women and girls appear to experience higher rates of sexual violence associated with social media than do men and boys (Henson, Reyns & Fisher 2011; Li 2006; Sengupta & Chaudhuri 2011). Some research has also shown that sexual bullying in the form of 'slut-shaming' on social media is disproportionately directed at young women (Fairbairn, Bivens & Dawson 2013, p. 18).

Sexual violence online is not something fundamentally new, but rather a continuation of the diverse forms of sexual violence in women's everyday lives (Powell & Henry 2017, p. 23). However, Powell and Henry (2017, p. 5) offer the concept of 'technology-facilitated sexual violence' to describe the 'harmful sexually aggressive and harassing behaviours [that] are being perpetrated with the aid […] of digital communication technologies'. Technology-facilitated sexual violence is extremely common (Powell & Henry 2017, p. 300), and expresses and re-institutes gendered power relations and women's positioning as 'sexed' subjects (Powell & Henry 2017, p. 23). In this research, sexual violence occurred with little

reaction from young people. Powell and Henry (2017, p. 29) stress that sexual violence against women should not be considered normal, or be expected and therefore thought of as tolerable. To consider it in this way trivialises it and denies its harms (Powell & Henry 2017, p. 29). While young females were the targets of violence on Facebook, females also contributed to the risk. Through 'reframing' risks, young people demonstrated 'unknowing' of risks. Here, females used the word 'stalking' often, and the word 'raping' was used equally by males and females. Young people also showed 'unknowing' of risks through normalisation. Shaming was done in an ordinary and comical way, and females engaged in this more than males. Females (and one male) also shared postings of self-harm.

Powell and Henry (2017, p. 25) highlight how gendered violence and sexual violence are both private and public harms. Violence may be experienced as a personal and private violation, but women as a social group also experience 'everyday' intrusions in public spaces (Powell & Henry 2017, pp. 25–26). In addition, the online space has made sexual violence increasingly 'public', making first-hand accounts of women's experiences of diverse forms, and 'everyday' experiences, of sexual violence more public (Powell & Henry 2017, p. 26). Pavan (2017, p. 74) stresses that it is necessary to recognise the 'socio-technical nature of online gendered violence'. Gendered violence online is complex and ever-evolving as a result of technological affordances and sociocultural practices (Pavan 2017, p. 74). How young people engage with risk through their everyday practices clearly shows that the experiences of females are different from those of males. Females were more active in their engagement with risk on Facebook; they were the targets of violence online, and also participated in creating risks for other young people.

Conclusion

My research has explored the complexities of how young people engage with risk on Facebook. Taking a youth-centred approach has shown that the context of young people and risk on social media is much more complex than the common, negative, adult-centric narrative describes. Dominant perspectives have privileged an adult viewpoint, and have failed to consider risk on social media from the perspective of young people. This research has amplified young people's voices which has often been silenced in discussions of young people and risk on social media.

My research found that young people engage with risk through risk practices of knowing and unknowing, and making and taking risks. These practices reflect how ideas of risk are co-constructed by young people, and how these ideas are intertwined with identity formation and the need for belonging. The engagement with risks through risk practices clearly show how violence is an everyday experience, and also that risks of violence are gendered. These discoveries provide a deep reflection on the complex nature of risk and young people on Facebook. In the next and final chapter, I outline recommendations for further research and practice in this area.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

I think Facebook is as safe a place as any. There is an element of risk in everything we do in daily life, it's all about minimising that to the best of our ability, living by the limits that we feel are individually appropriate, and I think, importantly, taking responsibility for our actions. (Nicole)

This research generated youth-centred understandings of how young people engage with risk on Facebook. The major contribution of this research is that it supports an alternative understanding of young people on social media that is based on young people's perspectives and experiences.

In answer to the central research question (How do young people engage with risk through their everyday practices on Facebook?), I conclude that young people engage with risk on Facebook as an everyday experience of their online presence. Young people actively engage in their own risk practices by 'knowing and unknowing' and 'making and taking' risks. Young people demonstrated how they 'know' and 'unknow' risks through practices of recognising, reframing, and normalising risks. Young people showed how they 'made' and 'took' risks through connection, content, and collective practices. This engagement reflected how ideas about risk on Facebook are co-constructed, and is intertwined with identity formation and the need for belonging. Significantly, the results of the study show that violence was an everyday experience for participants, and that their everyday online practices were gendered.

This research, therefore, changes the way we think about young people as a group. A youth-centred approach suggests that a different understanding of young people on social media is needed. This research has also been fruitful for social work practice, education and policy that pertains to young people.

I begin this chapter by highlighting the need to reframe the risk narrative, the necessity of a youth-centred approach, the importance of dissolving polarised dichotomies, and the need to recognise that young people have agency. I then explain the implications of this research for social work theory and practice, policy and education. I also suggest possibilities for future

research in this area. The chapter concludes by acknowledging the assumptions and limitations of this research.

Reframing the risk narrative

As highlighted above, the dominant narrative that surrounds the topic of young people on social media is highly negative. This risk narrative has contributed to social media panics, which are influenced by a combination of factors. The risk society thesis asserts that risk is everywhere, and that we are all vulnerable to risk. In addition, the discourse of risk commonly frames risk as a negative concept, the meaning of which is 'danger'; risk is thus something to avoid. Compounded with these ideas are the notions of young people being an 'at risk' group. Young people are commonly considered to be in a developmental stage in need of guidance and protection by adults, and have historically been considered 'at risk', a group that is not powerful. In addition, the Internet is regarded as a risky space, especially in relation to young people. Young people, who are regarded to be 'at risk' in many contexts, are also viewed this way on social media. This view positions young people as vulnerable and in need of protection from the many risks that exist online. In this way, the risk narrative is created by compounding ideas: that we live in a risk-filled society, that risk is a negative concept, that young people are 'at risk', and that the Internet is a risky space. This results in social media panics about young people in online spaces.

A youth-centred approach

I challenge the risk narrative about young people and social media and argue that there is more to it. Young people are not the passive receivers of risk online. They are not simply 'at risk' by virtue of being young or being online. Risk is instead something that is created, perceived and experienced by young people within their own culture on social media. This research has shown that while risks do exist on social media for young people, the story is not all doom and gloom. Risks can have both positive and negative attributes. A youth-centred perspective on young people and risk on social media is crucial, and this research has shown how young people engage with risks through their everyday practices on Facebook. A focus on how young people engage through practices of risk allows for a much more considered

understanding of young people and their online social interactions. This research aligns with boyd's (2014, p. 16) assertion that: 'Reality is nuanced and messy, full of pros and cons. Living in a networked world is complicated'. Ultimately, the story of young people and risk on social media is a complex one, but I believe we can heed boyd's (2014, p. xi) view: 'By and large, the kids are all right. But they want to be understood'.

Dissolving polarised dichotomies

The topic of young people online is complex. My research acknowledges that while there are risks to and for young people on social media, this viewpoint to too simplistic. It fails to account for how young people engage with risk online. The context of young people on Facebook is so complex that polarised visions of the space do not provide a clear account of young people's experiences.

There are risks online, but young people face risks in their everyday lives, in many different contexts. Social media is so ingrained and entwined in young people's lives that an easy distinction between online and offline cannot be made. Young people in this research showed how their online/offline worlds blend seamlessly; they are constantly connected while going about their everyday lives. Facebook is just another part of young people's social world. This distinction between the online and offline worlds is one of many polarised dichotomies that relate to young people on social media.

Other dichotomies include the vision of social media being either utopic or dystopic, either good or bad. In addition, there are the contrasting notions of social media presenting risks or opportunities. I argue that both risks and opportunities exist simultaneously on social media. The polarised dichotomies, online/offline worlds, utopic/dystopic visions, bad/good, risks/opportunities are unhelpful. My research has shown that young people engage with risk through their everyday practices, and that young people demonstrate that they can manage their interactions and experiences confidently and independently.

Young people have agency

The common narrative framing young people in a vulnerable position discounts their ability to assert their agency in this context. This research has shown that through their engagement with risk, young people assert their agency. Young people on Facebook are constantly engaged with risk. Young people create risk and understandings of it. They know and unknow risk through recognising, reframing and normalising it. They also show that they make and take risks online. What is clear from young people's engagement with risk through their everyday practices is that they control this space and use their agency to create their own online experiences. They make confident, informed decisions about their Facebook use. Young people show they are self-responsible and in control of how they experience the very complex space of social media.

Linking back to social work

This research contributes to social work theory and practice, though it also contributes more broadly, to the fields of youth studies, risk studies, and social media studies. A social work perspective on this topic has allowed me to bring ideas and research from a range of disciplines together to provide a comprehensive account of the context. Basing this research on young people's perspectives and experiences has allowed for findings and discussions that are centred on young people themselves.

The research is significant to the social work discipline for a variety of reasons. Firstly, social work is commonly considered to be a risk profession, working with people both 'at risk' and 'a risk'. This risk thinking limits considerations of young people, and downplays how young people engage with risk. This research has focused on young people and their experiences, a group which has historically been labelled as vulnerable and 'at risk'. This research also highlights the agency of young people. Young people regulate their own space and make their own decisions. This positions young people not as a passive or dependent group, but rather as owning their actions and interactions, and possessing the ability to engage with risks on social media. This perception supports and promotes young people's rights and pertains to issues of social justice. As agents for change, there is a role for social workers to actively support the perspective of young people as being able to enact agency and make decisions for

themselves online and more broadly. More emphasis should be placed on how young people engage with and experience risk.

This standpoint has important implications for social work practice. It highlights the need for social workers to thoroughly examine how young people are thought about in terms of risk. It also means that social workers should question their initial assessments of young people, which may use the 'at risk' frame, and consider instead alternative conceptualisations. This research highlights the need to move away from common labels of young people. Practitioners who work with young people should hold the belief that they are capable and resourceful, and can make decisions independently and be responsible for them.

Further, the findings of this research are fruitful for direct social work practice and intervention. As Boddy and Dominelli (2017, p. 182) argue, social media research can 'help social workers keep pace with rapidly changing technologies and become well-informed about communication technologies, their use and misuse'. The findings are particularly relevant to social workers in organisations that deal with young people. For example, social workers within the Department of Education could use this study to enhance their understandings of issues of young people's use of social media. This research aligns with the recommendation of Hendry, Robards and Stanford (2017, p. 137) that mental health practitioners working with young people should 'adopt more critical perspectives when engaging with risk discourses that falsely frame young people's online social practices as *necessarily* negative'. Mental health practitioners can better support young people's recovery by focusing on the affordances of social media (Hendry, Robards & Stanford 2017, p. 138).

This research has shown that young people use their agency in their risk practices online. Therefore, social workers working with young people could use this evidence as a starting point to help young people identify and harness the ways in which they can assert their agency, not only online, but more generally. A focus on young people's agency is a key thread which links many areas of practice in order to empower young people (Sharp 2014, p. 347). A perception of having agency may increase young people's 'resilience and adaptability to life challenges' (Sharp 2014, p. 347). Encouraging, improving and enhancing young people's agency is essential, and direct practice should be focused on strategies and techniques that achieve this.

While direct social work practice is largely done in traditional, face-to-face contexts, there is much scope for this work to be done online. Ballantyne, Lowe and Beddoe (2017, p. 22) highlight how social media has transformed the ways 'people create, collaborate, and maintain social relationships'. Social media allows people to reach across time and space to connect with others anywhere in the world (Ballantyne, Lowe & Beddoe 2017, p. 22). Only recently has social work examined the use of social media in social work practice (Boddy & Dominelli 2017, p. 172). Franklin, Hossain and Coren (2016, p. 344) suggest that there is a need to develop new, sustainable ways to give young people a voice; social media could enable young people to share experiences relevant to social care. The Australian Association of Social Workers currently provides ethics and practice guidelines for social workers on social media, and information and communication technology (AASW 2016a; AASW 2016b; AASW 2016c). As Boddy and Dominelli (2017, p. 174) state, the 'challenge for social work is to use the benefits and opportunities that social media enables, without causing harm and reflect critically on their incorporation into everyday practice'.

This research also provides a deeper understanding of engagement with risks on social media, given the growing importance of e-spaces in social work practice. As Stanfield and Beddoe (2016, p. 284) state: 'The impact of social media demands the attention of social workers all over the world – both because of its significant influence on local societies, and for its potential as a tool for advocacy on social justice issues'. Social workers should embrace, critique and become competent within the social media space (Stanfield and Beddoe 2016, p. 286). There has also been growing focus within social work debate and research about social workers using social media professionally. Ballantyne, Lowe and Beddoe (2017) researched social workers using a closed Facebook group to discuss social work issues. They found that social workers involved in the group valued feeling connected to a community of practice, liked being able to post and share information, and appreciated access to this information and other news (Ballantyne, Lowe & Beddoe 2017, p. 32). Their research also found that social workers were concerned about online incivility, and were thus reluctant to post opinions for fear of criticism (Ballantyne, Lowe & Beddoe 2017, p. 34).

Social work education can benefit from this study and make use of knowledge derived from it on the context of the social media space. Firstly, research method units should include a large proportion of education on virtual ethnography and netnographic research. This kind of research is in line with and reflective of current society. It is a fruitful way of gaining

participants, doing research, and gathering information on various social work issues and topics. Secondly, the context of the social media space should be included in social work education to improve understanding of ethics. As social work extends to incorporate many social media spaces, in direct practice and in networking between professionals, attention must be paid to the ethics of these actions. Boddy and Dominelli (2017, p. 182) argue that instruction on 'ethical social media usage should become mandatory' in social work education.

Implications for policy

The capacity of young people to direct our understandings of risk and social media lies at the heart of this research, speaking against the common narrative derived from adults' perspectives of young people as needing protection and guidance. The findings suggest the need to emphasise the knowledge and responsibility that young people possess, and to support them in making use of them. This ethnographic research on young people interacting with risk on social media can inform policy-makers in various ways, such as those suggested by Brewer (2000, p. 164):

- It can help to reveal the world-view and social meanings of those affected by policies or intervention strategies,
- It can help to reveal the views of those thought to be part of the problem that policies or intervention strategies are intended to address,
- It can be used to evaluate the effects of policies or intervention strategies, as these effects are perceived and experienced by the people concerned,
- It can be used to identify the unintended consequences of policy initiatives and strategies as they manifest themselves in the experiences of people,
- It can be used to provide cumulative evidence that supplies policy-makers with a body of knowledge that is used to inform decision-making, and
- It can be used to supplement narrow quantitative information and add flesh to some of the statistical correlations and factual data used to inform decision-making.

As Livingstone and Haddon (2009, p. 1) highlight, policies need to 'balance the goals of maximising opportunities and minimising risks require an evidence-based approach'. This

research provides evidence of the complexities of young people's practices on social media that could have implications for policies in this field. The legacy of the dominant mass media and research narrative for many years regarding young people online 'has primarily been regarded as potentially harmful […,] and policy advice has followed suit' (Livingstone et al. 2017, p. 83). Most social policy is driven by a problem-focused approach, but focusing on problems and deficits inhibits growth (Hill 2008, p. 107). Livingstone et al. (2017, p. 101) stress that it is time for policy-makers, parents and researchers to rethink the dominant emphasis on harm. Policies should ensure that the focus shifts from young people's online practices as risky or problematic towards a more youth-centred view.

Houghton (2015, p. 236) describes how concentrating on young people's agency should not only refocus our thoughts about and responses to social topics, but also in relation to young people's involvement in research and policy-making. Policies on young people and social media should begin from a youth-centred perspective. Houghton (2015, p. 243) describes young people as 'young experts' who can participate in developing national policy. White, Wyn and Robards (2017, p. 289) argue that youth policies tend to be developed in the abstract, which excludes young people, and instead call for young people to be directly involved. Policies should harness the abilities of young people to act in positive ways in social media spaces. While there are clearly risks for young people online, the opportunities must also be fairly represented in policy to provide an accurate understanding of the context. This research has highlighted that young people are not simply vulnerable innocents in need of protection online, so social policies should make use of and be based on the knowledge of discerning young people themselves.

The Australian Government has created a website titled 'Young and eSafe' (see www.esafety.gov.au/youngandesafe), which promotes positive online behaviour by offering practical advice by young people for young people. The site's approach is consistent with the conclusions of this research, namely that young people deserve to be heard and that their opinions on their social media use are of value. Initiatives such as this should be praised and utilised to enhance young people's positive experiences on social media.

Areas for future research

Although this research contributes to the understanding of young people's engagement with risk online, further exploration is needed. Further research in this area will contribute to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of young people on social media in the risk context. Understanding the complexity of social media requires further study of associated social issues. A main area to explore further is the risk practices that young people engage with on social media. Knowing and unknowing risks and making and taking risks were practices that young people engaged in, each of which could be analysed extensively.

This research revealed, without factoring it into its design, that violence was woven throughout young people's everyday experiences online. What could be explored at a deeper level is the degree of harm that young people experience as a result of experiencing this emotional and sexual violence, and of engaging in risky practices online. Exposure to risk online does not necessarily equate to young people experiencing harm. It would be beneficial to establish the extent and consequences of these experiences, and to investigate young people's opinions on and experiences of this matter in future research.

To increase the scope of this study, future research could make use of a substantially enlarged sample, and may also benefit from investigating social media spaces other than Facebook, such as Instagram and Snapchat. This research focused on young people aged 15 to 18 years, but it could be beneficial to conduct research with younger participants as they increasingly spend time in online spaces.

Through future research and increased exploration, a more comprehensive understanding of young people, how they engage with risk on social media, and the implications of these things for our dealings with young people can be achieved.

Assumptions and limitations

Several assumptions underpinned this research, including that:

- Young people's accounts of their experiences of Facebook use are a meaningful and valid research interest,

- Young people would be able to identify, express and explain aspects of their Facebook use in relation to their online engagement with risks, and
- Observation of young people on Facebook would uncover data on their engagement with risks online.

The main strength of this research is that it provides an in-depth insight into the experiences of young people on Facebook from their perspective. However, in any research that uses a qualitative methodology, a fundamental limitation lies in the findings' generalisability. The findings from the 73 observed and 16 interviewed participants cannot be assumed to reflect the experiences, opinions or behaviours of all young people in the social media context. However, the strength of this qualitative research is that it produced rich data from the young people involved.

Recruitment of participants was initially done solely online. Recruiting via the Internet, while having advantages, also has limitations. An advantage of this method was that I was able to construct an online invitation exclusive to young people within the desired age range through Facebook itself. This meant that I did not need to travel to different physical locations and could invite young people directly to the research. This method was slow in gaining participants, as while there was high interest in the research initially, resulting in 6,771 clicks on the advertisement over seven months, this did not translate into participation. In response to the slowness of recruitment by this means, I also then recruited in person through schools and youth service providers. While this method was limited to these institutions, it did increase the number of participants. Using these two avenues of recruitment resulted in the participant sample consisting of young people residing not only in Tasmania, but throughout Australia.

Conducting interviews online also presented limitations. Corresponding in this way resulted in interviews of variable duration and timing – participants chose the dates and times of their interviews. However, given the erratic nature of young people's lives, interviews were often not organised in advance and were conducted upon the young person's initiation. This proved time-consuming, as I needed to be online regularly to be available for young people to request an interview.

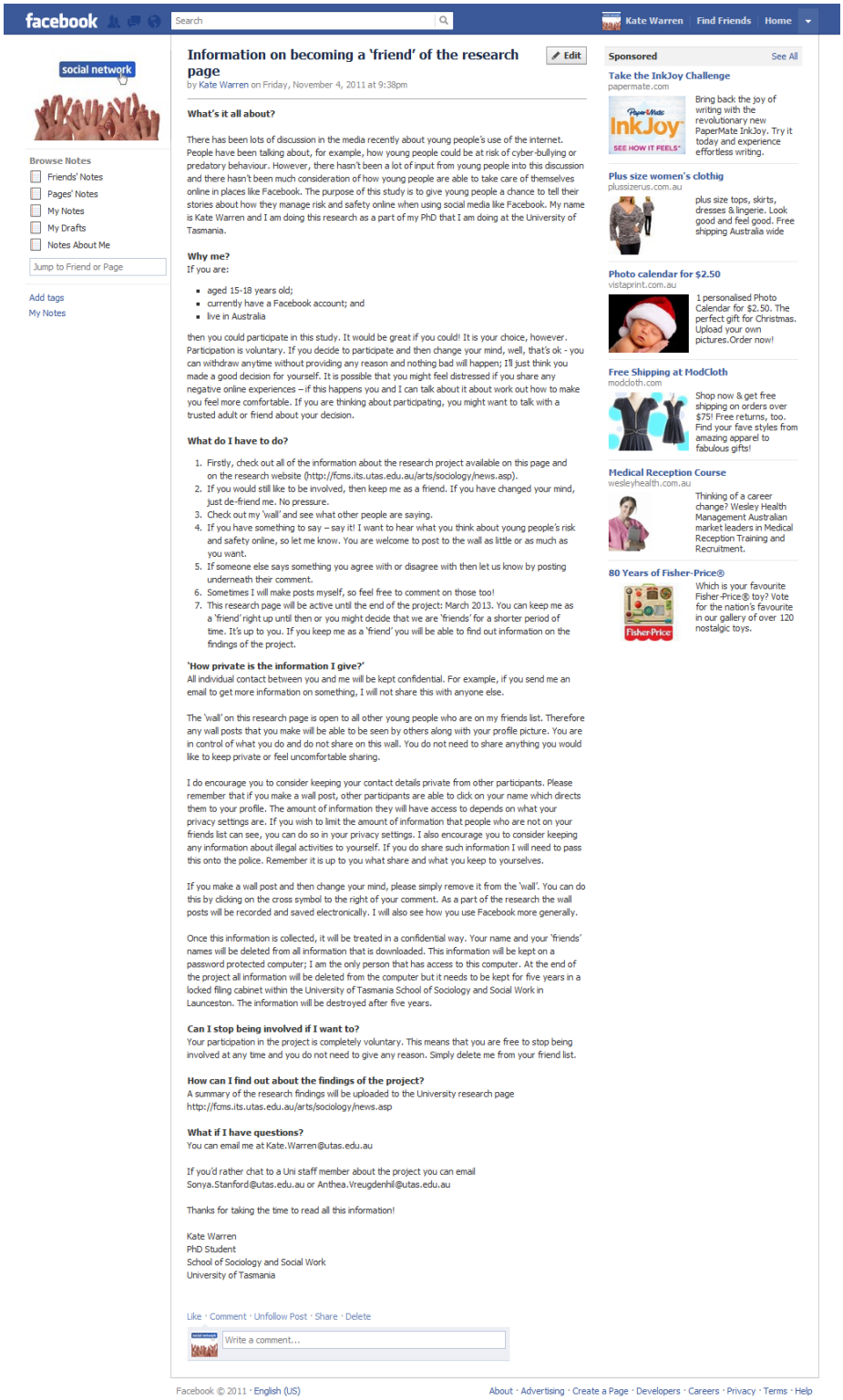
When I began this research, I considered whether it would remain relevant through to completion and submission. As the rate of technological change is rapid, and the social media

habits of young people change with it, it was questioned whether this research could remain current. As I write this conclusion, the concepts, ideas and deliberations that surround the topic of young people and risk on social media *do* remain relevant and current. Facebook has continued to be a space inhabited by hordes of young people, and they continue to use it to connect with one another. While this research is specific to Facebook, its ideas and conclusions are important across the many social media spaces that are currently available. As boyd (2014, p. 27) says, '[s]ocial media is a moving landscape', but 'core principles and practices' are likely to persist.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis I have argued that the dominant narrative of young people on social media is incomplete. The positioning of young people as an 'at risk' group, while important to acknowledge, is not the only way to think about young people. Viewing young people as innocent and vulnerable online does not account for the responsibility and capabilities they possess. This research has gone some way to supporting an alternative perspective on young people that is youth-focused. The online space of social media is complex, presenting both risks and opportunities for young people. By considering the topic from a youth-focused approach and foregrounding young people's perspectives and experiences, I conclude that young people engage with risks through their everyday practices, that they know and unknow risks, and make and take risks, and that through these collective practices they develop their identities and sense of belonging on social media.

Appendix 1: Information on Becoming a 'Friend' of the Research Page



facebook

Search

Kate Warren | Find Friends | Home

social network

Browse Notes
- Friends' Notes
- Pages' Notes
- My Notes
- My Drafts
- Notes About Me

Jump to Friend or Page

Add tags
My Notes

Information on becoming a 'friend' of the research page

Edit

by Kate Warren on Friday, November 4, 2011 at 9:38pm

What's it all about?

There has been lots of discussion in the media recently about young people's use of the internet. People have been talking about, for example, how young people could be at risk of cyber-bullying or predatory behaviour. However, there hasn't been a lot of input from young people into this discussion and there hasn't been much consideration of how young people are able to take care of themselves online in places like Facebook. The purpose of this study is to give young people a chance to tell their stories about how they manage risk and safety online when using social media like Facebook. My name is Kate Warren and I am doing this research as a part of my PhD that I am doing at the University of Tasmania.

Why me?
If you are:

- aged 15-18 years old;
- currently have a Facebook account; and
- live in Australia

then you could participate in this study. It would be great if you could! It is your choice, however. Participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate and then change your mind, well, that's ok - you can withdraw anytime without providing any reason and nothing bad will happen; I'll just think you made a good decision for yourself. It is possible that you might feel distressed if you share any negative online experiences – if this happens you and I can talk about it about work out how to make you feel more comfortable. If you are thinking about participating, you might want to talk with a trusted adult or friend about your decision.

What do I have to do?

1. Firstly, check out all of the information about the research project available on this page and on the research website (http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/arts/sociology/news.asp).
2. If you would still like to be involved, then keep me as a friend. If you have changed your mind, just de-friend me. No pressure.
3. Check out my 'wall' and see what other people are saying.
4. If you have something to say – say it! I want to hear what you think about young people's risk and safety online, so let me know. You are welcome to post to the wall as little or as much as you want.
5. If someone else says something you agree with or disagree with then let us know by posting underneath their comment.
6. Sometimes I will make posts myself, so feel free to comment on those too!
7. This research page will be active until the end of the project: March 2013. You can keep me as a 'friend' right up until then or you might decide that we are 'friends' for a shorter period of time. It's up to you. If you keep me as a 'friend' you will be able to find out information on the findings of the project.

'How private is the information I give?'
All individual contact between you and me will be kept confidential. For example, if you send me an email to get more information on something, I will not share this with anyone else.

The 'wall' on this research page is open to all other young people who are on my friends list. Therefore any wall posts that you make will be able to be seen by others along with your profile picture. You are in control of what you do and do not share on this wall. You do not need to share anything you would like to keep private or feel uncomfortable sharing.

I do encourage you to consider keeping your contact details private from other participants. Please remember that if you make a wall post, other participants are able to click on your name which directs them to your profile. The amount of information they will have access to depends on what your privacy settings are. If you wish to limit the amount of information that people who are not on your friends list can see, you can do so in your privacy settings. I also encourage you to consider keeping any information about illegal activities to yourself. If you do share such information I will need to pass this onto the police. Remember it is up to you what share and what you keep to yourselves.

If you make a wall post and then change your mind, please simply remove it from the 'wall'. You can do this by clicking on the cross symbol to the right of your comment. As a part of the research the wall posts will be recorded and saved electronically. I will also see how you use Facebook more generally.

Once this information is collected, it will be treated in a confidential way. Your name and your 'friends' names will be deleted from all information that is downloaded. This information will be kept on a password protected computer; I am the only person that has access to this computer. At the end of the project all information will be deleted from the computer but it needs to be kept for five years in a locked filing cabinet within the University of Tasmania School of Sociology and Social Work in Launceston. The information will be destroyed after five years.

Can I stop being involved if I want to?
Your participation in the project is completely voluntary. This means that you are free to stop being involved at any time and you do not need to give any reason. Simply delete me from your friend list.

How can I find out about the findings of the project?
A summary of the research findings will be uploaded to the University research page http://fcms.its.utas.edu.au/arts/sociology/news.asp

What if I have questions?
You can email me at Kate.Warren@utas.edu.au

If you'd rather chat to a Uni staff member about the project you can email Sonya.Stanford@utas.edu.au or Anthea.Vreugdenhil@utas.edu.au

Thanks for taking the time to read all this information!

Kate Warren
PhD Student
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University of Tasmania

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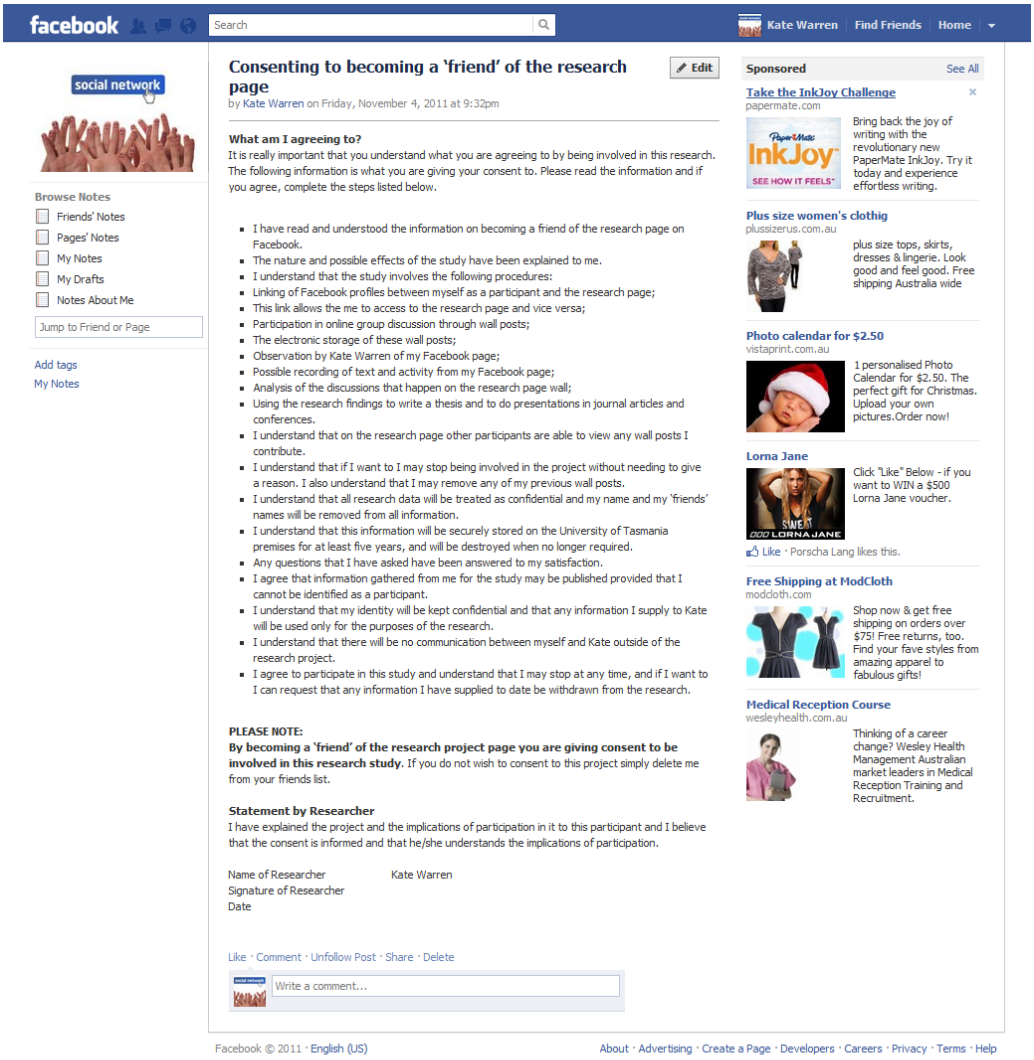
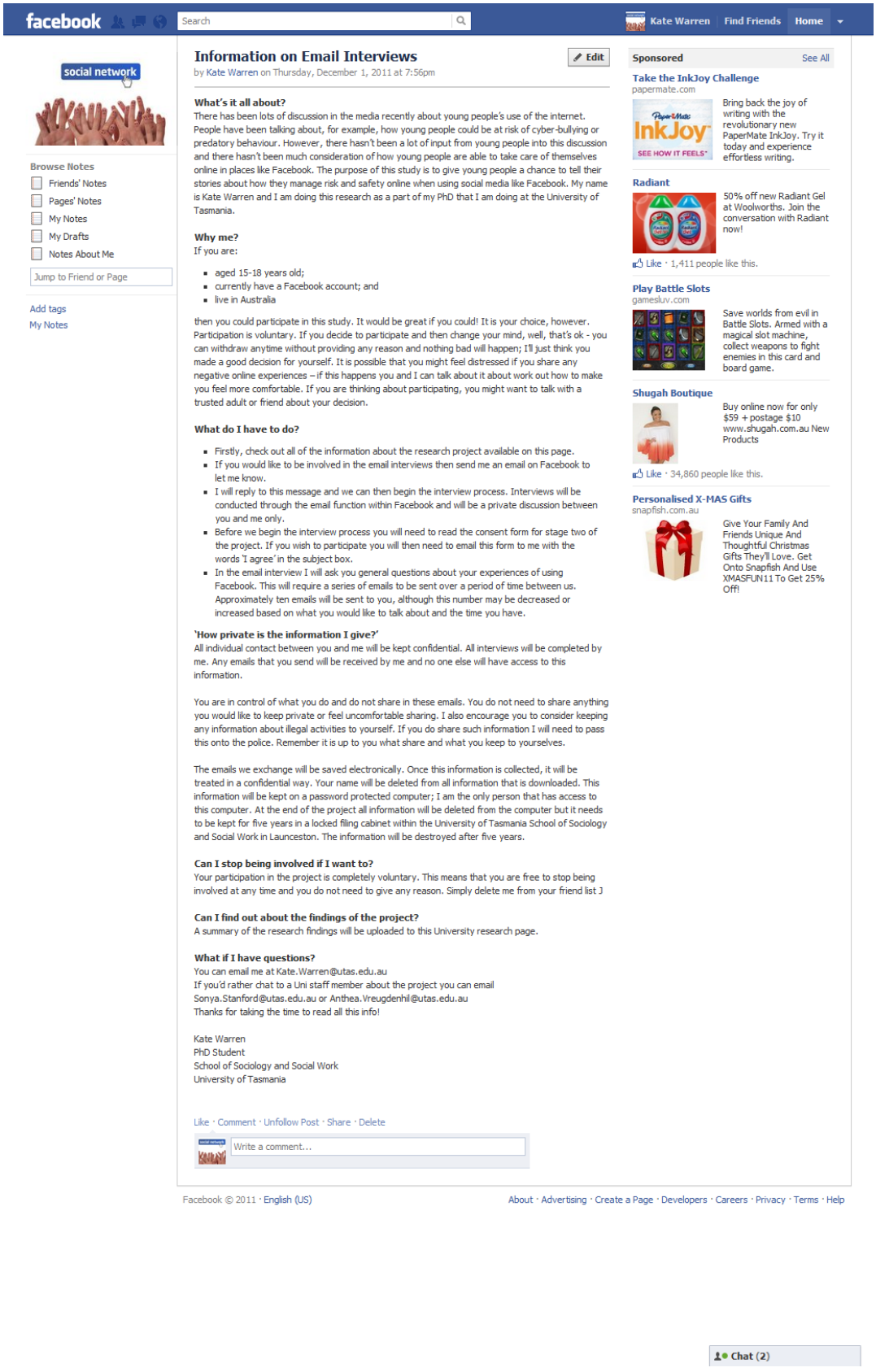
Appendix 2: Consenting to Becoming a 'Friend' of the Research Page



Appendix 3: Information on Email Interviews



facebook

Search

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social network

Browse Notes
- Friends' Notes
- Pages' Notes
- My Notes
- My Drafts
- Notes About Me

Jump to Friend or Page

Add tags
My Notes

Information on Email Interviews

Edit

by Kate Warren on Thursday, December 1, 2011 at 7:56pm

What's it all about?
There has been lots of discussion in the media recently about young people's use of the internet. People have been talking about, for example, how young people could be at risk of cyber-bullying or predatory behaviour. However, there hasn't been a lot of input from young people into this discussion and there hasn't been much consideration of how young people are able to take care of themselves online in places like Facebook. The purpose of this study is to give young people a chance to tell their stories about how they manage risk and safety online when using social media like Facebook. My name is Kate Warren and I am doing this research as a part of my PhD that I am doing at the University of Tasmania.

Why me?
If you are:

- aged 15-18 years old;
- currently have a Facebook account; and
- live in Australia

then you could participate in this study. It would be great if you could! It is your choice, however. Participation is voluntary. If you decide to participate and then change your mind, well, that's ok - you can withdraw anytime without providing any reason and nothing bad will happen; I'll just think you made a good decision for yourself. It is possible that you might feel distressed if you share any negative online experiences – if this happens you and I can talk about it about work out how to make you feel more comfortable. If you are thinking about participating, you might want to talk with a trusted adult or friend about your decision.

What do I have to do?

- Firstly, check out all of the information about the research project available on this page.
- If you would like to be involved in the email interviews then send me an email on Facebook to let me know.
- I will reply to this message and we can then begin the interview process. Interviews will be conducted through the email function within Facebook and will be a private discussion between you and me only.
- Before we begin the interview process you will need to read the consent form for stage two of the project. If you wish to participate you will then need to email this form to me with the words 'I agree' in the subject box.
- In the email interview I will ask you general questions about your experiences of using Facebook. This will require a series of emails to be sent over a period of time between us. Approximately ten emails will be sent to you, although this number may be decreased or increased based on what you would like to talk about and the time you have.

'How private is the information I give?'
All individual contact between you and me will be kept confidential. All interviews will be completed by me. Any emails that you send will be received by me and no one else will have access to this information.

You are in control of what you do and do not share in these emails. You do not need to share anything you would like to keep private or feel uncomfortable sharing. I also encourage you to consider keeping any information about illegal activities to yourself. If you do share such information I will need to pass this onto the police. Remember it is up to you what share and what you keep to yourselves.

The emails we exchange will be saved electronically. Once this information is collected, it will be treated in a confidential way. Your name will be deleted from all information that is downloaded. This information will be kept on a password protected computer; I am the only person that has access to this computer. At the end of the project all information will be deleted from the computer but it needs to be kept for five years in a locked filing cabinet within the University of Tasmania School of Sociology and Social Work in Launceston. The information will be destroyed after five years.

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Can I find out about the findings of the project?
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What if I have questions?
You can email me at Kate.Warren@utas.edu.au
If you'd rather chat to a Uni staff member about the project you can email Sonya.Stanford@utas.edu.au or Anthea.Vreugdenhil@utas.edu.au
Thanks for taking the time to read all this info!

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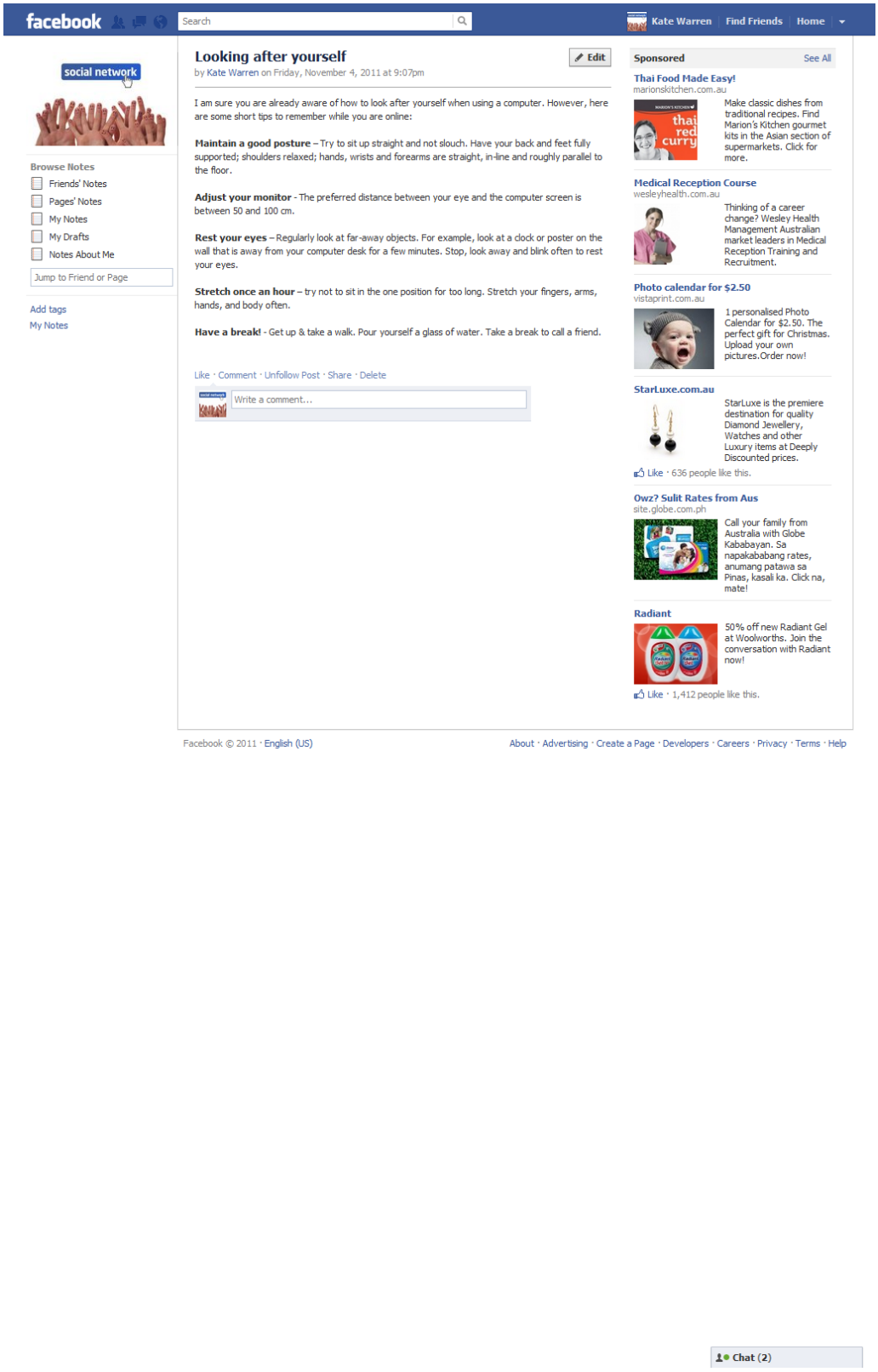
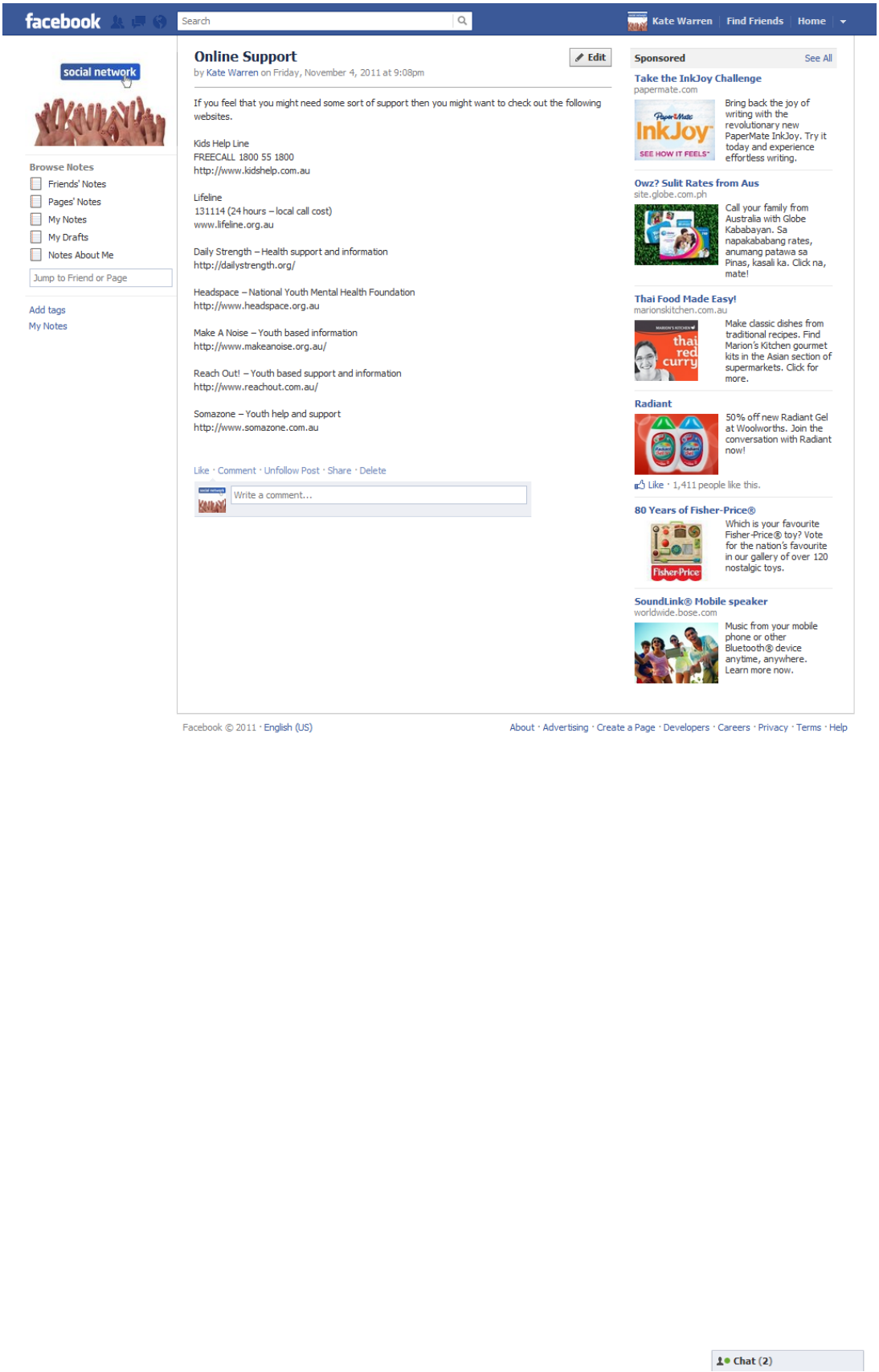
Chat (2)

Appendix 4: Consenting to Email Interviews on Facebook

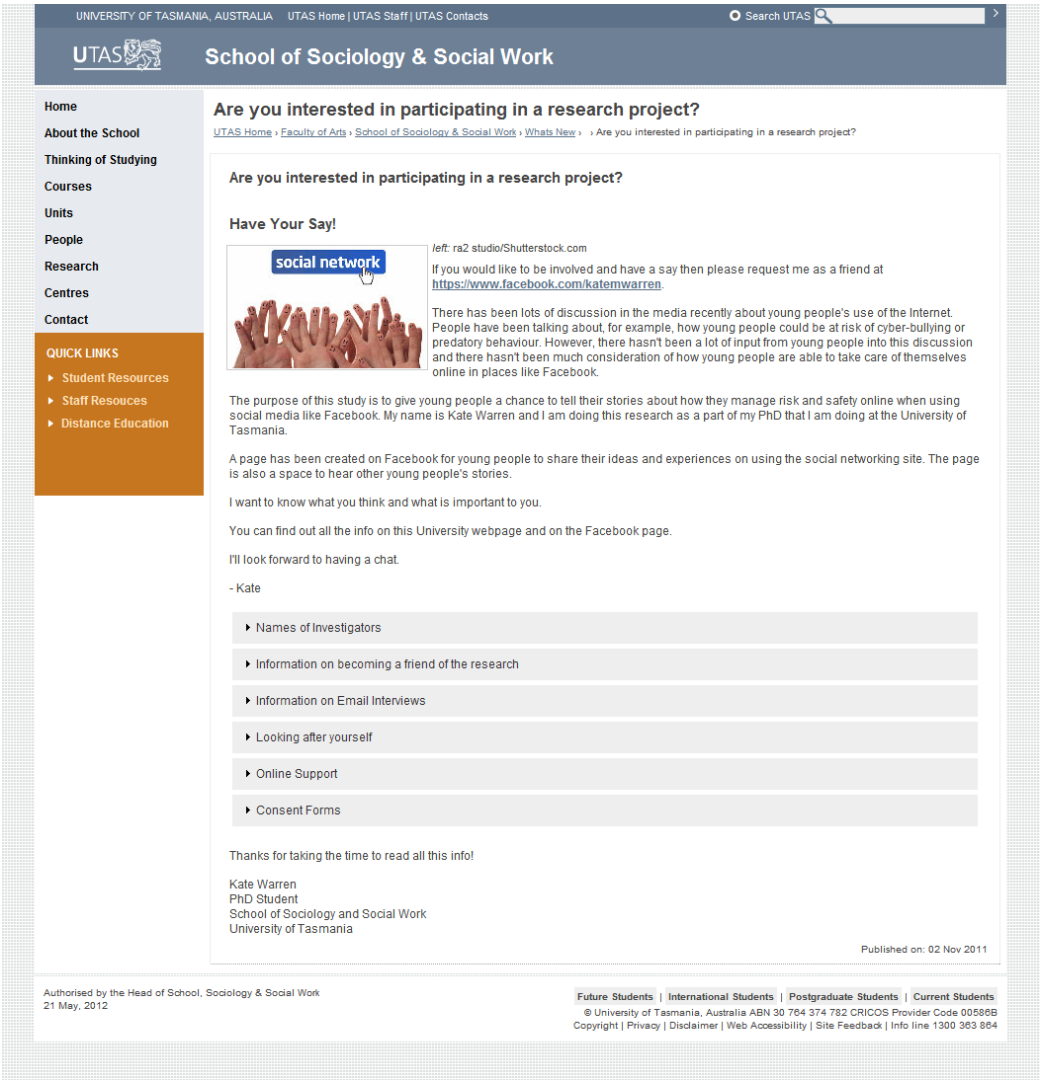
Appendix 5: Looking After Yourself



Appendix 6: Online Support



Appendix 7: Information on the Research



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Are you interested in participating in a research project?

Have Your Say!

left: ra2 studio/Shutterstock.com

If you would like to be involved and have a say then please request me as a friend at https://www.facebook.com/katemwarren.

There has been lots of discussion in the media recently about young people's use of the Internet. People have been talking about, for example, how young people could be at risk of cyber-bullying or predatory behaviour. However, there hasn't been a lot of input from young people into this discussion and there hasn't been much consideration of how young people are able to take care of themselves online in places like Facebook.

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A page has been created on Facebook for young people to share their ideas and experiences on using the social networking site. The page is also a space to hear other young people's stories.

I want to know what you think and what is important to you.

You can find out all the info on this University webpage and on the Facebook page.

I'll look forward to having a chat.

- Kate

- Names of Investigators
- Information on becoming a friend of the research
- Information on Email Interviews
- Looking after yourself
- Online Support
- Consent Forms

Thanks for taking the time to read all this info!

Kate Warren
PhD Student
School of Sociology and Social Work
University of Tasmania

Published on: 02 Nov 2011

Authorised by the Head of School, Sociology & Social Work
21 May, 2012

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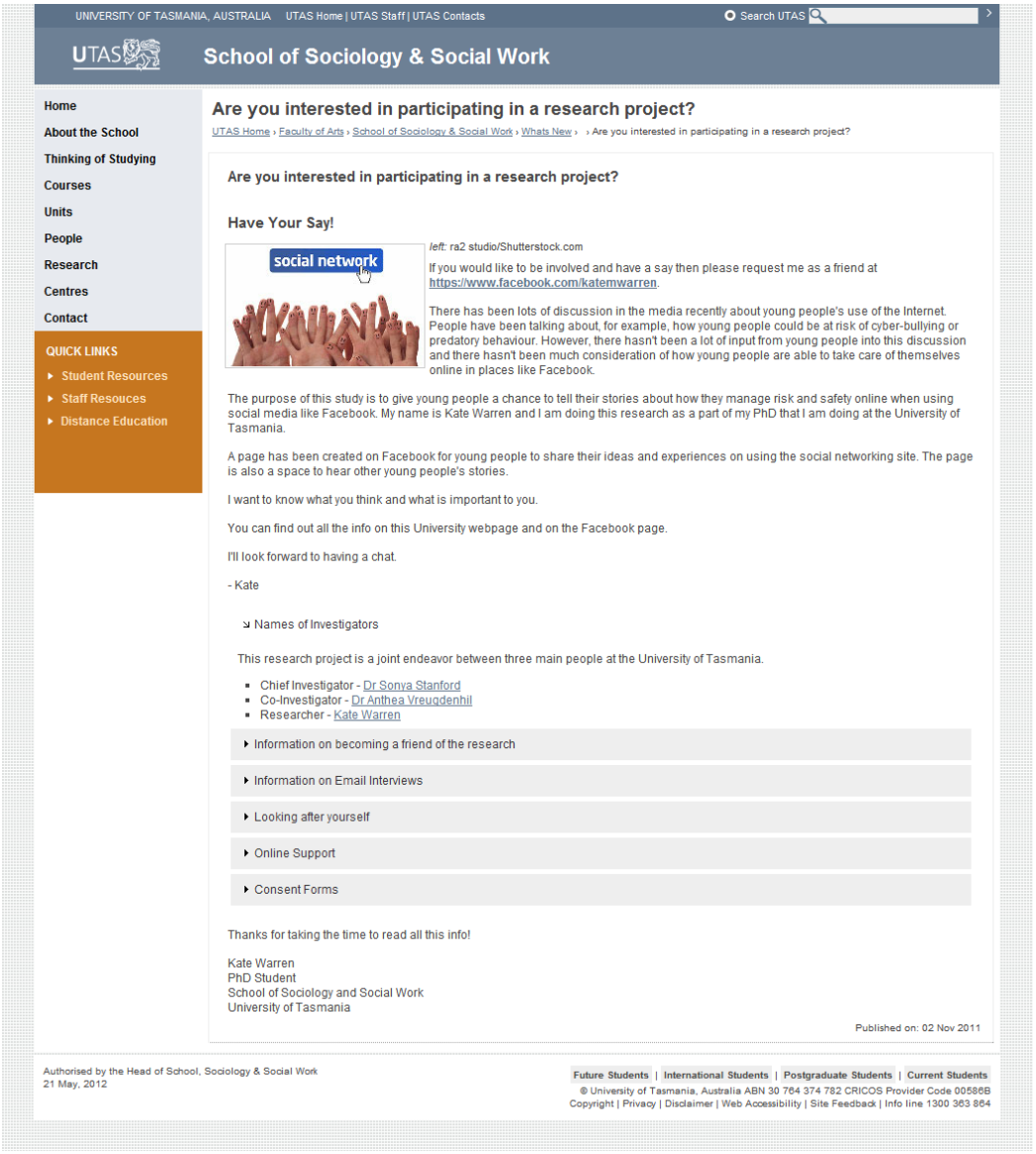
Appendix 8: Names of Investigators



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Are you interested in participating in a research project?

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You can find out all the info on this University webpage and on the Facebook page.

I'll look forward to having a chat.

- Kate

Names of Investigators

This research project is a joint endeavor between three main people at the University of Tasmania.

- Chief Investigator - Dr Sonya Stanford
- Co-Investigator - Dr Anthea Vreugdenhil
- Researcher - Kate Warren

Information on becoming a friend of the research

Information on Email Interviews

Looking after yourself

Online Support

Consent Forms

Thanks for taking the time to read all this info!

Kate Warren
PhD Student
School of Sociology and Social Work
University of Tasmania

Published on: 02 Nov 2011

Authorised by the Head of School, Sociology & Social Work
21 May, 2012

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